

George Clare.

Professor Hughes
and

Mrs Hughes

With kindest regards from

H.M.B.

October 28

1909.

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Ten great and good men : lectures

TEN GREAT AND GOOD MEN

LECTURES

BY

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PREFACE

THESE very unpretentious Lectures are sketches and no more. They are in no sense Essays or Memoirs. They make no claim to be a serious contribution to literature. They do not profess to give a critical, much less a complete, estimate of the character, the achievement, the permanent influence of the great men of whom they severally treat. They have no fresh matter to disclose. They are based, in almost all cases, on facts that have long been known. And yet it is hoped that they may be in some ways serviceable, as stimulants at least, if not as very solid food. Their aim has been single, though not ambitious. It has been to bring before average hearers, intelligent but not learned, some notion of the personality of a great man, in the hope that they might be so far drawn to him as to wish to know him much more intimately.

Lectures of this kind, delivered not by acknowledged masters in literature, like Lord Morley, Mr. Bryce, Sir Richard Jebb, and Mr. Frederic Harrison, but by writers who avowedly get their

information at second hand and make no claim to be authorities, seem to me to have a fairly definite, if a strictly limited, function. They are addressed not to students but to ordinary readers. Each Lecture ends with itself. It is not part of a course. Each occupies an hour, not much more nor much less. This condition must, to a large extent, determine its whole nature. It must be always "on the spot." It must never be dull or obscure. It must never bore or puzzle, or suggest thoughts that are at the moment irrelevant. It must portray rather than argue—show what the hero said, did, and aimed at, leaving criticism to others. The lecturer must, of course, know his subject well,—the more he knows the better—but one of his chief merits will be to omit largely. Much that interests himself must be deliberately cut out. He can dwell on only a few topics. There is no time for many. To introduce many would only confuse. His skill will lie in selection. The few topics that he chooses out of many must be attractive, striking, and characteristic.

If, as with most statesmen, like Burke and the younger Pitt, their life-work divides naturally into two or three groups, clearness will be gained by marking out the several frontiers, and not clearness only; the audience will be conscious of a sense of relief and of pleasure in crossing from one group to another. Each group should have salient

features of its own, and should be enlivened by well-chosen sayings of the hero himself or by what some notable man has said or written about him. No topic or anecdote should be introduced that does not arrest and rivet. Every sentence should tell, up to its last word. The attention of the hearers should never be allowed to flag. And this of course means that the delivery, as well as the treatment, must be adequate. It is, indeed, all-important. If the Lecture is read—and few lecturers have the gift of speaking so matured and so ready as to make their spoken matter as good all round as what they have written—if, I say, the Lecture is read, not spoken, very great pains must be taken to read not only clearly, but with animation, with a sense of being in touch with the audience, with genuine feeling, with constant variety of tone and accent.

How far the Lectures in this little volume come up to the standard thus suggested must be left to the judgment of readers. Most of them have been read out several times, in the course of the last twenty years, to very various hearers, and I can say with truth that they have been kindly received and have seemed to give pleasure.

In almost every case they are derived from the best known and the most easily accessible sources. John Wesley, for instance, is founded upon Southey's famous biography, which contains the

penetrating notes of S. T. Coleridge. The much longer Life by Tyerman, and the four octavo volumes of Wesley's wonderful "Journal," have been more sparingly used.

Again, for that small part of the career of the younger Pitt which alone is touched in the second Lecture, Lord Stanhope's well-known Life in four volumes has been, so to speak, my chief luminary, while lesser light has been freely and gratefully admitted, not only from the speeches of the statesman himself, but from the comments of men like William Wilberforce, Lord Brougham, Macaulay, Lecky, Lord Ashbourne, and Lord Rosebery. To each of the Lectures is appended a short list of the books on which it is based. Most of them should be found in the library of every good school or club. To some readers the list of such books will, doubtless, be of more value than the Lectures themselves.

Let me say in conclusion that, in deciding to publish these confessedly superficial pages, I have cherished the hope that they might, perhaps, be of service to some brother clergymen or schoolmasters, or others; men or women who are, from time to time, called upon to give addresses in schoolrooms or to Young Men's Christian Associations, and the like. These slight sketches of mine may suggest to them how, without anything like deep research, in their case often impossible, the

lives of great and good men and women in Church and State may be made the subject of an hour's read or an hour's talk without unduly fatiguing either the lecturer or the hearers. A real and profound knowledge of our leaders and benefactors is one of the richest draughts on the road of life ; but even "a little learning" may refresh and revive some thirsty traveller, and is certainly not "a dangerous thing."

H. M. B.

TRINITY LODGE,
October 1909.

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TEN GREAT AND GOOD MEN

SOME GLEANINGS FROM BURKE

I

THE title of my Address is "Some Gleanings from Burke." It claims to be at once humble and accurate. We gleaners are not great personages. We move about through rich cornlands which have been sown and reaped by others, and gather up here and there some stray stalks which have fallen from the golden sheaves. It looks much like stealing, but the world has agreed to give it a kinder name. As we ply our task, we may show diligence, and modesty, and even a kind of maidenly grace; but to glean with power, to glean with originality, to glean with even a touch of genius—this is mere confusion of images. We gleaners are after all "a feeble folk." And yet it is this process of "gleaning" which exactly expresses what I am trying to do in this very unpretentious

Address. It is not one more criticism on Burke. It does not affect to do what has been done so brilliantly in our generation by "men of light and leading," such as Mr. Lecky, or Mr. John Morley, or Mr. E. J. Payne. It does not offer you opinions about Burke. It simply hands to you pickings from himself, with just enough of note and comment to make the pickings intelligible.

So much for my poor figure of gleaning; and now, before we go further, let us take each other into confidence. Do allow me to hope that some among you may assure me tacitly by your ingenuous looks that you know very little of Burke, in which case I believe we may really get on pretty well together. And then as to myself, though I cannot offer you any helpful opinions about Burke's genius, yet it is only fair to confess that I do know something of him at first hand. For more than forty-five years, ever since I was a boy at Harrow, he has been my favourite author. Again and again, at different periods of life, I have come back fresh to his principal works, making long and careful analyses, copying out salient passages, doing in short all that I could to aid a sadly imperfect memory. This labour has been a labour of delight, of increasing delight as the years rolled on, and the one reward which I covet to-day at your hands is that you may come to share, if you have it not already, a double portion of this delight. I am almost tempted to say to young men who know not Burke what Talleyrand said to the unhappy

youth who knew not whist—"Young man, you are preparing for yourself a gloomy old age."

To begin, then, and at first apart from all details—In what lies the charm of this great man? In this, I reply, that he touches the public life of man at so many points and with so much depth, dignity, and grandeur. If you wish to test a writer's greatness, note how he deals with the commonplaces of life. The Psalmist shows this greatness when he says, "The days of man are but as grass; for he flourisheth as a flower of the field." Virgil shows it when he writes—

"Sunt lacrimae rerum, et mentem mortalia tangunt."

Shakespeare shows it when he says—

"We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep."

Gray shows it when he writes, like a scroll on the tomb of human pride—

"The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Awaits alike the inevitable hour,
The paths of glory lead but to the grave."

And Burke shows this same note of greatness again and again when dealing with the commonplaces that he has made his own, the commonplaces of politics.

What are some of these? Shall I carry you with me if I suggest the following—the nature and limits of liberty, the responsibilities of empire, the

influence of tradition, "the divinity which doth hedge" historical institutions, the true conception of a people, the meaning of political rights, of representation, of compromise, the value and the danger of party, the influence in politics both of morality and religion, the small part played by theory and speculation as compared with the large part played by custom and acquiescence? Those who study Burke will find that on such subjects, such commonplaces as we call them, he has said something, and said it well—said it in the grand style, with "the large utterance of the early gods."

Just to take two instances, favourites of mine, if you will allow me to say so. In 1770 he was speaking of the manners of public men. Some of us think of them as public gladiators—here the *Secutor* advancing with his trident, there the *Retiarius* waiting to throw the net over his head. How we enjoy their feints, their thrusts, and their parries! Who will draw the first blood? For the courtesies of the fencing-room we care but little. Not so Burke a hundred and twenty years ago. "It is our business," he says, "carefully to cultivate in our minds, to rear to the most perfect vigour and maturity, every sort of generous and honest feeling that belongs to our nature; to bring the dispositions that are lovely in private life into the service and conduct of the commonwealth; so to be patriots as not to forget we are gentlemen." How humane he is! How "large," as we said, is his "utterance"!

The other passage of which I was thinking is just ten years later. His constituents at Bristol, whom he greatly respects, are like the fabled constituents north of the Tweed. They are "heckling" him. Few great men, I suppose, enjoy the process of being "heckled." Some men writhe under the vivisection; some attempt, but with poor success, to smile. See how Burke brushes off his tormentors:—"I must beg leave just to hint to you that we may suffer very great detriment by being open to every talker. It is not to be imagined how much of service is lost from spirits full of activity and full of energy, who are pressing, who are rushing forward, to great and capital objects, when you oblige them to be continually looking back. Whilst they are defending one service, they defraud you of a hundred. Applaud us when we run; console us when we fall; cheer us when we recover; but let us pass on—for God's sake let us pass on." Here again surely a large and noble utterance. As long as it echoes in my ears, I may be foolishly confiding, but I can never "heckle" my Member.

And now, in fewest words, what is Burke's place in history? When did he live? What are the chief events with which he had to deal? I will give you just a few facts, easy to remember. He was an Irishman, and was born in 1729, exactly twenty years before Charles Fox, thirty years before William Pitt and the capture of Quebec, forty years before Napoleon and Wellington, and sixty years before the French Revolution. He died at Beacons-

field in 1797 ; so he was not quite seventy years of age. He became a Member of the House of Commons in 1765, when he was already thirty-six. Three great countries are for ever connected with his name, America, India, France. You cannot study the American War of Independence ; you cannot trace the early wrongs and the generous vindication of India ; you cannot scrutinise the French Revolution, and the face which it wore to the men that witnessed it, without meeting at every turn the speech, the genius, I had almost said the heart, of Burke.

II

LET us travel with him first to America. In 1765 George III. had been for five years on the throne. The Marquess of Rockingham, head of the old Whig Party, had just succeeded George Grenville as Prime Minister. He made Burke his private secretary, and found him a seat in Parliament. It was a grave crisis—as Burke himself nine years afterwards described it, “a time for a man to act in.” The ill-fated Stamp Act of George Grenville had borne its fruit. America, but lately as loyal as the Egyptian Hall, was in virtual revolt. The new Government held that the Stamp Act must be repealed. A Bill with this object was brought in. The debates that followed were vehement and prolonged. “Two great orators and statesmen,” says Macaulay, “belonging to two different generations, repeatedly put forth all their powers in defence of the Bill. The House of Commons heard Pitt for the last time, and Burke for the first time, and was in doubt to which of them the palm of eloquence should be assigned. It was indeed a splendid sunset and a splendid dawn.”

From Burke's first speech it was instantly clear

that a new power had entered the political world. Mr. Pitt followed him in debate, and complimented the new Member in terms which were a certificate of fame. Dr. Johnson said of him: "Burke has gained more reputation than perhaps any man at his first appearance ever gained before. He made two speeches for repealing the Stamp Act, which were publicly commended by Mr. Pitt, and have filled the town with wonder." Of these speeches no fragment has been preserved. The age of those passionless dispensers of fame and infamy, the shorthand writers, was not yet. Not till nine years later, after America had been first pacified and then again irritated and finally embittered, was any speech of Burke published.

Burke's mind on America is to be gathered from three main sources. First, the great *Speech on American Taxation*, April 19, 1774, of which Lord John Townshend said, after listening to one grand passage, "Good God! What a man is this! How could he acquire such transcendent powers?" Secondly, the *Speech on Conciliation with America*, March 22, 1775, to my own mind the most finely chiselled, if not the most massive, of all the monuments of his eloquence. Thirdly, the *Speech at Bristol*, 1780, together with several letters, one of them of signal grandeur, addressed in preceding years to the Sheriffs and some of his constituents in that city. The passages that I am about to quote to you are gleaned promiscuously from these three fields. You will judge whether they have

an interest for the antiquarian only or for the living statesman also.

We often hear of the phrase "sentimental grievances." Some men speak slightly of them. Burke is not one of these. "No man," he said, when speaking of America, "ever doubted that the commodity of tea could bear an imposition of three pence. But no commodity will bear three pence, or will bear a penny, when the general feelings of men are irritated, and two millions of people are resolved not to pay. The feelings of the colonies were formerly the feelings of Great Britain. Theirs were formerly the feelings of Mr. Hampden when called upon for the payment of twenty shillings. Would twenty shillings have ruined Mr. Hampden's fortune? No! but the payment of half twenty shillings, on the principle it was demanded, would have made him a slave."

Again, is there any one here who hates half measures in politics, and thinks that in dangerous crises there is no danger so grave as shilly-shallying? He will find that Burke has gone before him. "Let us, sir, embrace some system or other before we end this Session. Do you mean to tax America, and to draw a productive revenue from thence? If you do, speak out; name, fix, ascertain this revenue; settle its quantity; define its objects; provide for its collection; and then fight when you have something to fight for. If you murder, rob; if you kill, take possession; and do not appear in the character of madmen as well as

assassins, violent, vindictive, bloody, and tyrannical, *without an object*. But may better counsels guide you ! ”

Again, does any man know the value in politics of trusting the heart rather than the head, of confiding much in widespread feeling, and but little in fine-drawn logic ? Here, too, he will find in Burke a spokesman. “ Again and again revert to your old principles. Seek peace and ensue it. Leave America, if she has taxable matter in her, to tax herself. I am not here going into the distinctions of rights, not attempting to mark their boundaries. I do not enter into these metaphysical distinctions ; I hate the very sound of them. Leave the Americans as they anciently stood, and these distinctions, born of our unhappy contest, will die along with it. Be content to bind America with laws of trade. You have always done it. Let this be your reason for binding their trade. Do not burthen them with taxes. You were not used to do so from the beginning. Let this be your reason for not taxing. These are the arguments of States and kingdoms. Leave the rest to the schools ; for there only they may be discussed with safety.”

And again, in the same tone, though in a different speech : “ I am resolved this day to have nothing at all to do with the *right of taxation*. The question with me is not whether you have a right to render your people miserable, but whether it is not your interest to make them happy. It is not what a

lawyer tells me I may do, but what humanity, reason, and justice tell me I ought to do."

A few of his maxims, to my mind maxims of wisdom, I will throw in almost without connection, and you will not ask me too suspiciously from what corn-lands they are gleaned. "What dignity," he asks, "is derived from perseverance in absurdity?" "Falsehood has a perennial spring." "Tyranny is a poor provider." "The irresistible operation of feeble counsels." "If we lose the profit, let us get rid of the odium." "Great and acknowledged force is not impaired, either in effect or in opinion, by an unwillingness to exert itself." "Our fault was more tolerable than our attempt to mend it, and our sin far more salutary than our penitence." "Your ancestors did not churlishly sit down *alone* to the feast of Magna Charta." "I do not know the method of drawing up an indictment against a whole people." "I confess that the character of the judge in my own cause is a thing that frightens me." "An Englishman is the unfittest person on earth to argue another Englishman into slavery. Your speech would bewray you." "By an eternal law, Providence has decreed vexation to violence, and poverty to rapine." "I have no idea of a liberty unconnected with honesty and justice."

I have reserved to the end of this part of our study the famous close of the *Speech on Conciliation*. It marks, if I mistake not, the flood-tide of political oratory. If there are any here who know

it not, I would venture to say to them what Mr. Fox said, many years after, of the speech as a whole, "Let gentlemen read this speech by day, and meditate upon it by night; let them peruse it again and again, study it, imprint it on their minds, impress it upon their hearts." I can but give you a few sentences of this august peroration. "My hold of the Colonies," cries the great orator, "is in the close affection which grows from common names, from kindred blood, from similar privileges, and equal protection. These are ties which, though light as air, are as strong as links of iron. Let the Colonies always keep the idea of their civil rights associated with your government; they will cling and grapple to you, and no force under heaven will be of power to tear them from their allegiance. But let it be once understood that your government may be one thing, and their privileges another; that these two things may exist without any mutual relation—the cement is gone, the cohesion is loosened, and everything hastens to decay and dissolution. . . . All this, I know well enough, will sound wild and chimerical to the profane herd of those vulgar and mechanical politicians who have no place among us; a sort of people who think that nothing exists but what is gross and material, and who, therefore, far from being qualified to be directors of the great movement of empire, are not fit to turn a wheel in the machine. But to men truly initiated and rightly taught, these ruling and master principles, which, in the opinion of such men

as I have mentioned, have no substantial existence, are, in fact, everything and all in all. Magnanimity in politics is not seldom the truest wisdom, and a great empire and little minds go ill together. If we are conscious of our situation, and glow with zeal to fill our places as becomes our station and ourselves, we ought to auspicate all our public proceedings on America with the old warning of the Church—*Sursum Corda !* We ought to elevate our minds to the greatness of that trust to which the order of Providence has called us. By adverting to the dignity 'of this high calling, our ancestors have turned a savage wilderness into a glorious empire, and have made the most extensive, and the only honourable, conquests, not by destroying, but by promoting the wealth, the number, the happiness of the human race. Let us get an American revenue as we have got an American empire. English privileges have made it all that it is. English privileges alone will make it all it can be. In full confidence of this unalterable truth, I now (*quod felix faustumque sit*) lay the first stone of the Temple of Peace."

Alas for the impotence of wisdom and eloquence ! The first stone so majestically laid by the master-builder had no superstructure. For the motion were recorded seventy-eight votes ; for the previous question, two hundred and seventy.

III

IT is a long voyage from America and from Bristol to India. Yet our visit there must after all be but a hasty one. To Burke himself indeed India was his chief battlefield. "If," he said the year before he died, "if I were to call for a reward—which I have never done—it should be for those services in which for fourteen years, without intermission, I showed the most industry, and had the least success ; I mean in the affairs of India. They are those on which I value myself the most ; most for the importance ; most for the labour ; most for the judgment ; most for constancy and perseverance in the pursuit. Others may value them most for the intention. In that, surely, they are not mistaken."

Burke's views upon India are to be found chiefly in his speech on Mr. Fox's East India Bill in December, 1783 ; in the speech on the Nabob of Arcot's Debts in February, 1785, which Lord Brougham, no mean judge of oratory, pronounced his masterpiece ; and finally, of course, in the long series of orations which make part of the impeachment of Warren Hastings. Confining ourselves to the two speeches in the House of Commons, we are

struck with one keynote, his indignation against the insults offered by the servants of the Company to the princes and ministers of the ancient kingdoms of the East. His mind dwelt on the greatness of India, not as a prize, but as an historic survival. He delighted to measure her with the great central Empire of Europe, Oude with Prussia, Arcot with Saxony, the English provinces with the estates of Austria. "It is," he says, "an Empire of this extent, of this complicated nature, of this dignity and importance, that I have compared to Germany and the German Government, not for an exact resemblance, but as a sort of middle term, by which India might be approximated to our understandings, and, if possible, to our feelings, in order to awaken something of sympathy for the unfortunate natives, of which I am afraid we are not perfectly susceptible, whilst we look at this very remote object through a false and cloudy medium."

There you hear the man of genius, and the man of feeling, which is part of genius. He must bring the telescope of sympathy to survey his fellow-subjects. He must see the multitudes whom his nation rules, and for whose fate and even dignity he feels personally responsible.

The result of Burke's long researches, even so early as 1783, is to bring an awful indictment against the Company. He thus pledges himself to make good three positions. "First, I say, From Mount Imaus to Cape Comorin, there is not a single prince, state, or potentate, great or small,

with whom they have come into contact, whom they have not sold. Secondly, there is not a single treaty they have ever made, which they have not broken. Thirdly, there is not a single prince or state, who ever put any trust in the Company, who is not utterly ruined."

These charges he proceeds to establish in detail ; but what most rouses his wrath is the vulgar heartlessness even more than the downright cruelty of the conquerors. "Our conquest," he complains, "after twenty years is as crude as it was the first day. The natives scarcely know what it is to see the grey head of an Englishman. Young men, boys almost, govern there, without society, and without sympathy with the native. They have no more social habits with the people than if they still resided in England. Animated with all the avarice of age, and all the impetuosity of youth, they roll in one after another, wave after wave ; and there is nothing before the eyes of the natives but an endless, hopeless prospect of new flights of birds of prey and passage, with appetites continually renewing for a food that is continually wasting."

Convinced that the Company are wholly incorrigible, Burke will not listen to the stock plea that the public faith is plighted to their Charter. This fidelity to crime was to him intolerable cant. "If I kept such a faith," he scornfully cries, "with what is called the Company, I must break the faith, the covenant, the solemn, original, indispensable oath, in which I am bound, by the eternal

frame and constitution of things, to the whole human race." In these burning words you have the secret of Burke's persistent labours, which culminated in the impeachment of Hastings. Hatred of tyranny over the oppressed was balanced in his mind, and almost more than balanced, by disgust at the petty greed of the oppressor. Such pettiness, he argued, must surely bring its retribution. "If we make ourselves too little for the sphere of our duty; if, on the contrary, we do not stretch and expand our minds to the compass of their object; be well assured that everything about us will dwindle by degrees, until at length our concerns are shrunk to the dimensions of our minds. It is not a predilection to mean, sordid, home-bred cares, that will avert the consequences of a false estimation of our interest, or prevent the shameful dilapidations into which a great empire must fall, by mean reparations upon mighty ruins."

Words, ladies and gentlemen, worthy surely to be engraved on the minds of every citizen of an imperial nation. That Burke failed in what he would have called the great effort of his life, we all know. Hastings was acquitted, but it does not therefore follow that the impeachment was useless. It cleared the sluggish air of British indifference. It touched the national conscience. It awoke in the breast of conquerors a sense of trusteeship. It preluded and ensured the dawning of a brighter day. To have evoked the slumbering morality of a proud and strenuous race, to have recalled his

countrymen with a voice of power to their better mind, is a boast which Burke would not have made for himself, but which we may fairly make for him at this distance of time. India is still, as she was a hundred years ago, the truest touchstone of England's conscience. Barely three weeks have passed since the House of Commons rang with applause to a few sentences, not, indeed, from Burke, but from one whom he seemed to have inspired. "It has been said," he cried, "that India has no representative in this House. I deny the accuracy of that allegation. The representatives of India in this House are not one or two individuals who have a profound and special interest in Indian affairs. Every Member of this House, whether elected by an English, or by a Scotch, or by an Irish constituency, is a member for India. All the interests of India—personal, political, commercial, financial, and social—are committed to the individual and collective responsibility of the House of Commons. I ask the House to discharge that gigantic trust uninfluenced by any selfish and party feeling, but with wisdom, and justice, and generosity." That those words should have been spoken and acted upon in 1895 by the Secretary of State for India,¹ is due in part to his own firm and upright character, but it may be due in part also to the principles inculcated by Burke more than a hundred years ago.

¹ Sir Henry Fowler, now Viscount Wolverhampton.

IV

LONG before the impeachment of Hastings had dragged its slow length to the clearly foreseen termination a new page of history had been turned. The States-General had met at Versailles on May 5, 1789. The French Revolution had begun. We have all of us some sort of opinion as to this great event, and we can all appeal to facts to support it. Either we are drawn to it, or we shrink from it. We have balanced in some sort benefits no longer questioned against horrors no longer palliated. We know now, more than any Englishman could know at the time, how rotten were the foundations on which the reformers had to build; how little remained in old institutions round which love and reverence could fasten; how profound was the chasm of distrust between the privileged and the non-privileged classes. And we also see now, with a clearness which was then impossible, how hard and hopeless a task it is for a nation to cut, as it were, its history in two, to turn its back upon its earlier self, and begin a new life ostentatiously severed from the ties of the old.

Burke dealt with this astonishing phenomenon when it was yet in its infancy. The Revolution

had lasted but a year and a half when his famous *Reflections* were published. The work, therefore, was begun, the opinions which dictated it were formed, many months before. The destruction of the Bastille on July 14, the abolition of Feudalism on August 4, the ignominious dragging of the King and Queen to Paris on October 5—these three events were of themselves sufficient for Burke, sufficient to satisfy him that the new movement contained almost every element of evil which his long life and varied studies had taught him to dread and to loathe.

What, then, did he think of France at the time of the great outbreak? Contrast is sometimes comment. There may be many here who have been thrilled by that wonderful chapter at the beginning of Carlyle's *French Revolution* which describes the death of Louis xv. Apart from the special horrors of that awful death-bed, the general effect of the whole sombre picture is to warn us that the nation's institutions were rotten to the core; that, to borrow the stern language of Scripture, "the whole head" was "sick, and the whole heart faint"; that the Old Order, with all its brilliance, its sins, and its wasted opportunities, had been weighed in the balances and found wanting, because it had not, in its day, known the things which belonged to its peace. This is the dark background on which Carlyle's lurid picture is painted. Widely different is Burke's conception. As I quote him, you will be tempted to think him either

utterly shallow or somewhat dishonest. If I were his advocate, and you his jury, I should be tempted to conceal from you this weak part of his case. But we are all seekers after truth.

Let me read you a sentence from his letter to Mr. William Elliot in 1795. "In the long series of ages," he says, "which have furnished the matter of history, never was so beautiful and so august a spectacle presented to the moral eye as Europe afforded the day before the Revolution in France." Again, in the first of his famous *Letters on a Regicidal Peace*, written the year after, 1796, when the young Buonaparte was beginning his career of conquest on the plains of Piedmont and Lombardy: "The fall of the French Monarchy was far from being preceded by any exterior symptoms of decline." What would Carlyle say to this? "A very little time before its dreadful catastrophe there was a kind of exterior splendour in the situation of the Crown, which usually adds to government strength and authority at home. . . . In that its acme of human prosperity and greatness, in the high and palmy state of the monarchy of France, it fell to the ground without a struggle."

Could this monarchy have been reformed instead of being destroyed? The question has been asked a hundred times, and will continue to be asked as long as men go to the oracle of history to read the signs of their own epoch.

Burke, as you see, was one of those who would have reformed, and this from the very texture of

his mind. He was a profound disbeliever in what he calls "metaphysic"—what we should rather call "theory"—in politics. To him history was the explanation of life. He read the present through the past. He was not indeed indifferent to the rights of human beings any more than to their duties. Injustice and cruelty, as Macaulay said of him, made his blood boil in his veins. But what he prized was not the ideal rights of man, but the historic rights of Englishmen or of Frenchmen. What the law had chartered, what custom had moulded, what common consent and common life had hallowed, that was to him the sacred property which men were entitled to claim as their own. When that right was attacked, not before or after, Burke became a rebel. "It is my leading principle," he says in one of his *Letters on France*, "in a reformation of the State, to make use of existing materials." We wished, at the period of the Revolution of 1688, and do now wish, to derive all we possess as an inheritance from our fathers." "I do not like to see anything destroyed, any void produced in society, any ruin on the face of the land."

This philosophy—this sentiment, if you like—pervades the *Reflections*. He has himself told us what was his object in writing them. "The foundation of government," he says, "is there laid not in imaginary rights of men, which at best is a confusion of judicial with civil principles, but in *political convenience* and in human nature." And

again, "the theory contained in the book is not to furnish principles for making a new constitution, but for illustrating the principles of a constitution already made. It is a *theory drawn from the fact of our government*." It was because there was not a trace of this sober historical spirit among the French reformers that Burke from the first detested and denounced them. To his mind they were a set of swindling speculators. "You set up your trade," he said, with the true scorn of an Englishman, "without a capital."

In what, then, it may be asked, lies the special value of his famous book? I can but hint at the answer, and advise my hearers to study it themselves. I admit that he was no fair or complete judge of this great moral and political volcano. He saw not the subterranean forces which made an eruption unavoidable; and when it came, he saw indeed its destructive but not its fertilising energy. The greatness of his work lies in its pregnant maxims hewn from life, in its firm hold on virtue, in its appreciation of the mysterious element of uncalculating and incalculable affection which lurks in all healthy institutions and in all established human society, in its confident appeals to the unselfish instincts of man—lastly, in its astonishing eloquence. If Burke had but a blind eye for the physical sufferings and the moral grievances of the poor French peasantry, such as they have been portrayed to us in the graphic pages of Erckmann-Chatrian; if, again, he spoke

far too lightly of the profligacy of the nobles, by contending, in a sentence which I must always think not characteristic, that "vice lost half its evil by losing all its grossness"; if, once more, it must be admitted that, throughout his splendid analysis of what he himself calls "the most astonishing revolution that has hitherto happened in the world," we fail to overhear, as we ought surely to overhear, the beatings of a heart vibrating, even against its will, to the passionate hopes of humanity—still, my friends, we must recognise the might and the majesty with which this great teacher gives utterance to the truths by which men and nations live. I can repeat to you but a few of these. He loved freedom, and spoke worthily of her, though to some of her more ardent lovers he seemed but a "lost leader." "I flatter myself," he said, "that I love a manly, moral, regulated liberty. With us, Englishmen, always acting as if in the presence of canonised forefathers, the spirit of freedom, leading in itself to misrule and excess, is tempered with an awful gravity." Again: "Our liberty becomes a noble freedom. It has its gallery and portraits." "Those who know what virtuous liberty is cannot bear to see it disgraced by incapable heads, on account of their having high sounding words in their mouths." It is not often that Burke is found using like language with one of the children of the Revolution, but here are we not reminded of poor Madame Roland at the foot of the guillotine?—"O Liberty, what things are done in thy name!"

Let me read you another maxim. The greater our share in political influence, the more need for us to remember it. "There is no qualification for government but wisdom and virtue, actual or presumptive. Wherever they are actually found, they have, in whatever state, condition, profession, or trade, the passport of heaven to human place and honour." That, ladies and gentlemen, is teaching for the hustings as well as for the Houses of Parliament. In the same lofty tone he urges upon democracies no less than kings the lesson which each requires. "All persons possessing any portion of power ought to be strongly and awfully impressed with the idea that they act *in trust*, and that they are to account for their conduct to the one great Master, Author, and Founder of Society." I said that he urges these thoughts upon democracies as well as kings. He was no flatterer of either. As a student of history, and as having "endeavoured through his whole life to make himself acquainted with human nature," he had satisfied himself that all unmixed forms of government were tyrannous and selfish, and that in England the fusion of three main elements, the kingly, the high-born, the popular, was the only guarantee for continuous settled freedom. Would you care to see his picture of what he calls a "natural aristocracy"? I place it among his most characteristic utterances. "A true natural aristocracy," he says, in his *Appeal to the Old Whigs*, "is not a separate interest in the State, or separable from it. It is an essential

integrant part of any large body rightly constituted. It is formed out of a class of legitimate presumptions, which, taken as generalities, must be admitted for actual truth. To be bred in a place of estimation; to see nothing low and sordid from one's infancy; to be taught to respect oneself; to be habituated to the censorial inspection of the public eye; to look early to public opinion; to stand upon such elevated ground as to be enabled to take a large view of the widespread and infinitely diversified combinations of men and affairs in a large society; to have leisure to read, to reflect, to converse; to be enabled to draw the court and attention of the wise and learned wherever they are to be found; to be habituated in armies to command and to obey; to be taught to despise danger in the pursuit of honour and duty; to be formed to the greatest degree of vigilance, foresight, and circumspection, in a state of things in which no fault is committed with impunity, and the slightest mistakes draw on the most ruinous consequences—these are the circumstances of men that form what I should call a *natural* aristocracy, without which there is no nation."

This, you will all say, is an ideal. Happy the nation that can still cherish it, and recognise in the language which adorns it not irony but fact. It is but the restatement of the old maxim of chivalry, *Noblesse oblige*. Birth and station have their responsibilities. So long as responsibilities are honestly borne and bravely discharged, I do

not believe that in this ancient country birth and station will cease to be trusted.

Ladies and gentlemen, I have detained you long, and must hasten to a close. This Address is not biographical. Still, the end of Burke's life is so tragic, and so tragically touched by his own pen, that we can scarcely pass it by. In 1794 a great calamity fell upon him. His only son, whom he strangely idolised, was taken from him by consumption. The poor father was crushed by the blow. The three years of life that still remained were most unhappy. Abroad the Reign of Terror was disgracing the name of Liberty. At home there was an irreparable breach between the author of the *Reflections* and his chief Whig friends. Over his own desolate house brooded the sleepless memory of his dead son. His intellect lost none of its power, though his judgment in estimating the state of France no longer even affected impartiality. His style was never more rich and incisive. Probably there is no pamphlet in our language which combines so many elements of pathos, majesty, deep thought, and scathing invective as his *Letter to a Noble Lord*. It was called forth in 1796 by a foolish and unfeeling attack made upon him in the House of Lords for having accepted a pension from the Crown. We have no time to follow its argument. I will only quote a few pathetic lines, which show us, not the once formidable statesman, but the old broken-hearted father. "The storm has gone over me,

and I lie like one of those old oaks which the late hurricane has scattered about me. I am stripped of all my honours. I am torn up by the roots, and lie prostrate on the earth. . . . I live in an inverted order. They who ought to have succeeded me have gone before me. They who should have been to me as posterity are in the place of ancestors."

The end of so much greatness and so much sorrow was near. He had gone to Bath for the benefit of the waters. There, with a few attached friends round him, he still spoke of the perils of Europe, and was still consulted by men in power. One of these consultations is described in the journal of William Wilberforce in words which have often been quoted: "Heard of the Portsmouth Mutiny; consultation with Burke. The whole scene is now before me. Burke was lying on a sofa much emaciated, and Windham, Lawrence, and some other friends were round him. The attention shown to Burke by all that party was just like the treatment of Ahithophel of old: it was as if one went to enquire of the oracle of God."

The language of the oracle at that great national crisis was such as might have been heard from a Senator of Rome when Hannibal was at her gates. "Never, never succumb to these difficulties. It is a struggle for your existence as a nation; and if you must die, die with the sword in your hand. But I have no fears whatever for the result. There is a salient, living principle of energy in the public

mind of England, which only requires proper direction to enable her to withstand this or any other impending danger. Persevere, therefore, till this tyranny be overpast."

Lofty words, worthy of a dying statesman. We will end with Christian words not less lofty, worthy of a dying man. A few weeks afterwards he resolved to return home, "there to await his end with unfeigned humiliation, and to prepare to submit to the will of God with trembling hope." "I have been," he said, in a letter to a lady, "four months at Bath to no purpose, and am therefore to be removed to my own house at Beaconsfield to-morrow, to be nearer to a habitation more permanent, humbly and fearfully trusting that my better part may find a better mansion." A month later the end came. On July 9, 1797, the great statesman and orator passed away. "The greatest man since Milton," Macaulay has said of him. There are some to whom even this estimate does not seem extravagant.

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THE SECOND WILLIAM PITT

TWO CHAPTERS IN HIS LIFE

I

HIS BIRTH TO HIS FIRST PREMIERSHIP

I SHALL feel the happier if you are good enough to allow me to make friends with you at the outset, and tell you frankly what, and what alone, this Lecture of mine professes to be.

It contains nothing new or original.

It does not discuss doubtful points. It does not seek to argue, or teach, or criticise. I have ventured to assume—with much respect, but with equal candour—that some among my audience may know but little of Pitt, except his name and his fame, and so my object has been to create an interest in a great man, rather than to guide or correct any interest that previously existed. Further, I have tried to remember that we have a very short time before us, and therefore, dismissing all notion of completeness as wholly im-

possible for one lecture, I have sternly limited myself to just two chapters of a most crowded life—the first and the last.

Be prepared, I would say to the better informed among my hearers, to find almost everything that you expected to hear passed over in impartial silence. You will hear nothing of Pitt's finance, nothing of his East India Bill, nothing of his attempts to reform the House of Commons, nothing of his staunchness at the time of the poor King's first madness, nothing of his attitude towards Warren Hastings, nothing of his duel with Tierney, nothing of his general foreign policy, nothing—positively nothing—of his accepting war with revolutionary France, nothing of his policy towards Ireland both at the beginning and the end of his administration, nothing of his resignation in 1801, when the King forbade him to supplement the Act of Union with an Act for the Relief of Roman Catholics.

If any friend is candid enough to urge that a lecture on Pitt's life, without any treatment of Pitt's first ministry of seventeen years is an absurdity, and almost a hoax, I may feel my *amour propre* wounded; but I would meekly plead, like the Athenian statesman of old, "Strike, but hear me!"

To begin, then, with our first chapter in the life of Pitt.

There are some great men in history whose acquaintance we cannot make, unless we are

first introduced to their fathers. Pitt is one of these. William Pitt the younger without William Pitt the elder—in a word, Pitt without Chatham—is an incalculable quantity.

And now I ask you to go back in imagination nearly one hundred and fifty years, to the great year 1759, and summon up, for the moment, all your historical and geographical resources.

“The year opened,” says Macaulay, “with the conquest of Goree; next fell Guadaloupe; then Ticonderoga; then Niagara. The Toulon Squadron was completely defeated by Boscawen, off Cape Lagos. But the greatest exploit of the year was the achievement of Wolfe on the heights of Abraham.

“The news of his glorious death and of the fall of Quebec reached London in the very week in which the Houses met. All was joy and triumph. Envy and faction were forced to join in the general applause. Whigs and Tories vied with each other in extolling the genius and energy of Pitt,” that is, of course, the first Pitt. “The situation which he occupied at the close of the reign of George II. was the most enviable ever occupied by any public man in English history. He had conciliated the King; he domineered over the House of Commons; he was adored by the people; he was admired by all Europe; he was the first Englishman of his time; and he had made England the first country in the world. The Great Commoner, the name by which he was often designated, might look

down with scorn on coronets and garters. The nation was drunk with joy and pride."

This is the language of patriotic rhetoric some eighty years after the event. Let me ask you to listen for a few moments longer to the language of patriotic poetry, almost contemporary with the event. It is no Macaulay who stirs us with his sharp, bugle voice, but a very different man—the gentle, melancholy, sometimes morbid, but essentially English William Cowper. See what the year 1759 meant to a poet of his heart and temper:

" England, with all thy faults, I love thee still.
Time was when it was praise and boast enough
In every clime, and travel where we might,
That we were born her children. Praise enough
To fill th' ambition of a private man,
That Chatham's language was his mother tongue,
And Wolfe's great name compatriot with his own."

And now let us bring you back to business by giving you one date to remember. It was on May 28, 1759, just four months before Wolfe's romantic death was known in England, that young William Pitt was born.

We are told in Greek history that Philip of Macedon heard in one day of a victory by his general, a victory by his racehorse, and the birth of his son, Alexander the Great. So in this *annus mirabilis* of England, this truly marvellous year, 1759, it was in the midst of victory after victory in all parts of the world that a son was born to the

mighty Chatham, a son whose renown was to equal, if not to transcend, his own.

I have laid so much stress on the greatness of the father because it explains in more than one way the early greatness of the son. Many of his father's finest qualities came to the second Pitt by inheritance. Again, his father took infinite pains with his early training. Yet again, the boy, before leaving the nursery, was nobly proud of his illustrious father. When, at seven years of age, he heard that his father was to be an Earl, he made an observation to his tutor which is probably rare even in the nurseries of the great: "I am glad I am not the eldest son; I want to speak in the House of Commons like papa."

But apart from what he owed directly to his father, he owed to him indirectly the nation's love and hope. England was prepared to believe in him and to trust him. When he first opened his lips in Parliament, his countrymen took for granted that in Chatham's son they would find genius, purity, and patriotism. And when, exactly twenty-five years after, the grave of his illustrious father was opened to receive his own emaciated frame, the mourning for the son recalled the mourning for his father. The feeling lines of Reginald Heber are a kind of epitaph on both :

"And thou, blest star of Europe's darkest hour,
Whose words were wisdom, and whose counsels power,
Whom Earth applauded through her peopled shores,
Alas ! whom Earth too early lost deplores ;

Young without follies, without rashness bold,
And greatly poor amidst a nation's gold.
In every veering gale of faction true,
Untarnish'd Chatham's genuine child, adieu !”

This, then, is the man whose career we have now to sketch. His childhood and youth must be touched very briefly. There are tempting anecdotes about both, but we must refuse the temptation. In one word, he was an astonishingly precocious boy, but never priggish.

His health was so delicate that he was never sent to a public school, in this respect differing from almost every leading English statesman except Mr. Disraeli, the late Duke of Devonshire, and Mr. Joseph Chamberlain. He came to Pembroke College here¹ when he was but four months over fourteen. In the dining-room of the Master's Lodge hangs a letter which may rouse emotion even in those who have not the privilege of being Pembroke men. It was addressed by Chatham to Mr. Turner, then tutor of the college, and is dated from Burton Pynsent, October 3, 1773. “He is,” says his father, “of a tender age, and of a health not yet firm enough to be indulged, to the full, in the strong desire he has to acquire useful knowledge. An ingenuous mind and docility of temper will, I know, render him conformable to your discipline in all points. Too young for the irregularities of a man, I trust he will not, on the other hand, prove troublesome by the puerile

¹ Cambridge University.

sallies of a boy. Such as he is, I am happy to place him at Pembroke ; and I need not say how much of his parents' heart goes along with him."

Pitt remained at Cambridge not less than seven years. He was an eager student, and made himself a good mathematician and an excellent classical scholar. He was still at Pembroke when he was called to accompany his father to that sad scene in the House of Lords, when the great statesman sank swooning to the ground, while lifting up his failing voice against the dishonour and dismemberment of his country.

Three years later Pitt entered the House of Commons, on January 23, 1781. Lord North was still Prime Minister, but tottering to his fall.

A few months later came the fatal news of the surrender of Lord Cornwallis. North received it, it was said, as he would have taken a cannon ball in his breast. He opened his arms, exclaiming wildly, as he paced up and down the room, "O God, it is all over !"

In March of the following year he resigned. His ministry was succeeded by a fusion of two sets of Whigs—the old Whigs, including Fox and Burke, who followed Lord Rockingham, and, so to speak, the Chatham Whigs, who, since Chatham's death, had looked to Lord Shelburne as their leader, the great-grandfather of the present Marquess of Lansdowne.

Of this rather motley crew Lord Rockingham was the chief captain, but he only survived four

months. He died July 1, and at once his bi-partite vessel went to pieces.

The King selected Shelburne as the new Premier, upon which Fox and his friends withdrew. Shelburne offered Pitt, then just twenty-three, the great post of Chancellor of the Exchequer, with the virtual lead of the House of Commons. But the ministry was not destined to last; there were too many hungry mouths outside. It lasted from July 1782 to February 1783. Its chief act was a Treaty of Peace with the United States of America. Soon it became rumoured that the two great enemies, Fox and North, the head of the old Whigs and the head of the old Tories, had agreed to forget their bitter feud, and to combine their forces against the Peace. The great debate was on February 23, 1783. It was now that Pitt delivered the wonderful declamation which fairly amazed both the House and the country. He had to defend the Treaty, to defend Shelburne, to denounce the Coalition, and to recognise his own approaching expulsion from office. Every one knows how he likens this profligate coalition to an unhallowed wedlock.

“I repeat, Sir, that it is not this treaty, it is the Earl of Shelburne alone, whom the movers of this question are desirous to wound. This is the object which has raised this storm of faction; this is the aim of the unnatural coalition to which I have alluded. If, however, the baneful alliance is not already formed, if this ill-omened marriage

is not already solemnised, I know a just and lawful impediment, and, in the name of the public safety, *I here forbid the banns.*"

Lord Stanhope says of this speech, I think soberly, "It is by far the greatest piece of oratory delivered either in ancient or in modern times by any man under twenty-five." It lasted from one o'clock till close upon four in the morning, and, as if to complete the marvel, during all the time that Fox was speaking, to whom he had to reply, the young orator was suffering, in an acute and even visible form, from most depressing sickness.

The division on this well-remembered night led to Shelburne's resignation. The King at once eagerly pressed the Premiership on the young finance minister of twenty-three. The last two letters that passed between them are indeed strange reading, Pitt's for its intolerable verbiage, the King's for its downright scold.

" *March 25, 1783.*

"Mr. Pitt received this morning the honour of Your Majesty's gracious commands. With infinite pain he feels himself under the necessity of humbly expressing to Your Majesty that, with every sentiment of dutiful attachment to Your Majesty and zealous desire to contribute to the public service, it is utterly impossible for him, after the fullest consideration of the situation in which things stand, and of what passed yesterday in the House of Commons, to think of undertaking, under such circumstances, the situation which Your Majesty has had the condescension and goodness to propose to him.

“As what he now presumes to write is the final result of his best reflection, he should think himself criminal if, by delaying till to-morrow humbly to lay it before Your Majesty, he should be the cause of Your Majesty’s not immediately turning your royal mind to such a plan of arrangement as the exigency of the present circumstances may, in Your Majesty’s wisdom, seem to require.”

Is it a monarch, we ask, or an angry school-master who writes as follows ?—

“Mr. Pitt, I am much hurt to find you are determined to decline at an hour when those who have any regard for the Constitution as established by law ought to stand forth against the most daring and unprincipled faction that this kingdom ever produced.”

Pitt had the strength to hold his own even under this royal castigation. He saw that the pear was not ripe. The hour must soon be coming, but it was not yet come. At last, on April 2, in spite of the “just and lawful impediment,” and the stern prohibition of the banns, the “ill-omened marriage” was “solemnised.” The Coalition became a part of history. Fox and North came jointly into office, each bringing his troop of followers.

“As they kissed hands,” so writes Lord Rosebery, “a humorous bystander predicted their early fall, for he observed George the Third turn back his ears and eyes, just like the horse at Astley’s

when the tailor it had determined to throw was mounting.”

The life of the Coalition was but short. It began in July and ended in December. In November Mr. Fox moved his famous East India Bill, and carried it rapidly through the Commons. But in the Lords it received a speedy death-blow.

The King authorised Lord Temple, Pitt's first cousin, to make it known that whoever voted for the Bill of his ministers was “not only not his friend, but would be considered by him as an enemy.”

This hint, undeniably broad, did its work.

The Bill was thrown out by ninety-five to seventy-six, and the next night, December 18, Fox and North were surprised at supper by the entrance of a royal messenger demanding the return of their seals of office, and adding that a personal interview would be displeasing to His Majesty.

The following day a new writ was moved for the borough of Appleby, in the room of the Right Honourable William Pitt, who, since his election, had accepted the office of First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The motion was received by the Opposition with shouts of laughter. The presumption of the boy minister seemed as ridiculous as it was impudent.

And now began that memorable struggle which even in our day, after more than a hundred and twenty years, stirs the blood of all who have a love for courage, genius, and youth. On the one

side stood, almost alone, not yet twenty-five, the intrepid son of Chatham, hopelessly outnumbered and seriously discredited by his cousin Temple's manœuvres.

On the other side were the serried ranks of the Coalition, furious at their sudden and insulting discomfiture, and led by a staff of consummate orators, who gave no quarter to their young antagonist. Week after week, from Christmas 1783 till near the end of March 1784, he stood at his post calm and unmoved.

On the very first day of his Premiership he was beaten in five divisions. He was taunted with treason to the Constitution. Nothing that he proposed, or might propose, had a chance of passing. But he stood firm. He would neither resign nor, though the King himself pressed it, dissolve. He would give his opponents "rope." He would show up their factious greed of power, and invite comparison with his own practical reforms.

He had already the support of the King, the Lords, and the City of London; and many signs portended that the tide of popular sympathy was rising in his favour. He must have thought again and again, as the formal majorities went against him, of George the Second's famous saying to his father, twenty-six years before: "Sir, you have taught me to look for the sense of my people in other places than in the House of Commons."

At last on February 20, an address to the King was moved, urging him to comply with the wishes

of the Commons, and remove these audacious ministers from their posts.

Pitt, after being badgered and menaced for just two months, night after night, met this fresh assault with a serene intrepidity unsurpassed by anything in the history of Parliaments. "If, Sir," he cried, "the constitutional independence of the Crown is thus reduced to the very verge of annihilation, where is the boasted equipoise of the Constitution? Where is the independence, nay, where is even the safety of any one prerogative of the Crown, or even of the Crown itself, if its prerogative of naming ministers is to be usurped by this House? . . . Dreadful, therefore, as the conflict is, my conscience, my duty, my fixed regard for the Constitution of our ancestors maintain me still in this arduous situation. It is not any proud contempt, or defiance of the constitutional resolutions of this House; it is no personal point of honour; much less is it any lust of power that makes me still cling to office. The situation of the times requires me, and, I will add, the country calls aloud to me that I should defend this castle; and I am determined, therefore, I *will* defend it."

While this conflict was at its height, an incident occurred which told immensely in Pitt's favour. By the death of a son of the great Sir Robert Walpole the clerkship of the Rolls fell vacant. It was a sinecure place for life, worth £3000 a year. Every one took for granted that Pitt would

bestow it on himself. In so doing he would have shocked no feeling. He had nothing out of office but £300 a year. With this £3000 he would be independent, and free from all necessity of going back to the Bar. But, to use Heber's words, the young minister was "untarnished Chatham's genuine child," and quite ready to be "greatly poor amid a nation's gold."

A job had been perpetrated the year before by Lord Rockingham, who gave a pension of over £3000 to Chatham's friend, Colonel Barré. Pitt arranged with Barré that he should give up the pension and receive the sinecure instead, thus saving the interests of the public. "This appointment," says Lord Stanhope, "made a strong impression on the country. It fixed upon a rock for the whole of his life the character of Pitt for personal disinterestedness."

"It is a great thing," says Macaulay, "for a man who has only £300 a year to be able to show that he considers £3000 a year as mere dirt beneath his feet, when compared with the public interest and the public esteem."

This incident happened in the middle of January. For two months more the Parliamentary battle was to rage, while the public looked on with astonishment.

The common idea seems to have been that the "big battalions" must win, and that the "boy," as they called him, must go down before the giants. A saying of Gibbon is quoted: "Depend upon it,

Billy's painted galley must soon sink under Charles' black collier." But it is one thing to be a historian, another to be a prophet. "Charles" was rapidly losing ground, "black collier" and all, and "Billy," by his splendid courage and well-tested purity, was becoming more and more the darling of the nation.

At length there came a crisis. On March 9, Fox moved the adoption of a long address to the King. At midnight, in breathless suspense, the House divided. The motion was carried, but only by a majority of one. This was decisive. The policy of giving your enemy "rope" enough had proved a triumphant success. No further obstruction was offered. On Lady Day, Parliament was dissolved. The new election smote down Fox and his companions hip and thigh. A hundred and fifty of them were thrown out, and were laughed at as "Fox's Martyrs."

Wilberforce, Pitt's most intimate friend, was returned with extraordinary éclat for the then undivided county of York.

Pitt himself was returned for the University of Cambridge, and held the seat till his death. Cambridge must indeed have felt proud of such a member and such a son!

II

HIS ELOQUENCE AND MANNERS

LET us leave him for a short time in this "day of" his "success" and inquire a little more closely what he was like both as an orator and as a man.

First, as an orator, he ranks among our very greatest, and yet, my friends, allow me to offer you a word of warning. His speeches are not lively reading. As Mr. Lecky puts it, in his admirable portraiture of Pitt, "what especially strikes the reader is their extreme poverty of original thought. They are admirably adapted for their immediate purpose, but beyond this they are almost worthless." And then he quotes a stern sentence from a cruel essay of Coleridge, which, nevertheless, ought to be read by every real student of Pitt. "When all is done, nothing rememberable has been said; no one philosophical remark, no one image, not even a pointed aphorism. Not a sentence of Mr. Pitt's has ever been quoted, or formed the favourite phrase of the day—a thing unexampled in any man of equal reputation."

So far Coleridge; but no one knew better than

Coleridge that a speech spoken is one thing, and a speech read another. The truth is, there are but few English orators whose speeches, like Burke's, read well. Fox is credited with the audacious paradox that any speech which is a success to the reader must have been a failure to the hearer—doubtless a loud exaggeration, yet not without an echo of truth. Eloquence is not easily defined. That which first arrests and then carries away a hearer is something very complicated, not one thing but many things. Depth of thought and beauty of diction are only part, sometimes only a small part, of the charm. What we all delight to see is an exhibition of human character—mind, voice, look, gesture, emotion, will, all conspiring together, at the moment, without previous concert, to show us a great or at least a gifted man.

There is room, as we look and listen, for every gift that makes man attractive or impressive—grace, ease, culture, versatility, wit, humour, irony, pleasantry ; or, again, dignity, majesty, enthusiasm, pathos ; or, yet again, scorn, indignation, sarcasm, invective ; or, once more, clear flowing statement or simple fair argument.

The sight of such gifts, so displayed, must always in all ages of the world be a great sight. It is by those who have seen this sight again and again, in other words, by his own contemporaries, that every orator must be judged.

Tried by this test, Pitt was beyond question one

of the very greatest of parliamentary orators. If, in estimating this class of speakers, we take into account habitual effectiveness, success both in statement and in reply, wide range of subject, frequency and suddenness of speaking, intrepidity, impressiveness, moral and intellectual ascendancy—in a word, sustained authority and recognised supremacy—we must, I think, reserve a special first class for four great Englishmen of the past—Chatham, Charles Fox, Pitt, Gladstone. All of these remarkable men could, year after year, on almost any subject, without a moment's preparation, speak for hours together, unwearied and unwearying, in such language and with such looks as to charm, rivet, subdue, sometimes even terrify, again and again sending their hearers away with words and thoughts like these: "He seemed inspired." "It was something of which I did not think the human mind capable." "I walked home lost in amazement at the compass, till then unknown to me, of human eloquence."

I do not think the whole of this could be said with truth of any other of our greater speakers, even such men as Burke, Sheridan, Canning, Macaulay, Stanley, or even John Bright. In some respects Bright seems to me to surpass them all; but he had not the range, the extempore power, or the wide culture which belonged to the four whom I have dared to select.

What, then, was the peculiarity of the second Pitt's oratory? From the first day that he spoke

in the House of Commons, February 26, 1781, "he came out," as his friend Wilberforce said at the time, "he came out, as his father did, a ready-made orator." It is hardly too much to say, that, wholly unlike Fox and almost every other speaker, he was as good at the beginning of his career as he was at the end. From first to last there was the same instinctive command of the right and telling word, the same poise of sentences, the same stately and majestic roll, the same sonorous and harmonious voice. And this heavy artillery could always be brought to bear, treble shotted, at a moment's notice.

Take one instance out of a hundred. It was on February 17, 1800, when the war with France was at its bitterest. Mr. Tierney had just challenged the minister to define in one sentence the object of the war, "without any *ifs* and *buts* and special pleading ambiguity." It so happened that among the strangers in the gallery of the House that evening was a young Cambridge graduate of twenty-five, my own dear father. More than once I have heard him describe the extraordinary effect of Mr. Pitt's *impromptu* reply. "I know not," he said, "whether I can do it in one sentence, but I can state it in one word. It is *security*—security against a danger, the greatest that ever threatened this country, the greatest that ever threatened mankind; a danger the more terrible because it is unexampled and novel."

As you may suppose, this one word "security" was beaten out into a good many words before the fiery orator had fully forged his thunderbolt. By his lofty bearing, his pride of patriotism, and his terrific sarcasm, he had not only mauled and mangled his incautious opponent, but he had also laid down, on the spur of the moment, a fresh basis of policy, and put fresh heart into all his friends.

His powers were used with equal readiness, and still more nobly, in attacking the odious Slave-Trade. By universal consent the grandest of all his speeches was on this subject, April 2, 1792, just before he was thirty-three years of age. It must have occupied many hours. "For the last twenty minutes," says Wilberforce, "he really seemed inspired. He was dilating upon the future prospects of civilising Africa, a topic which I had suggested to him in the morning." All Pitt's most jealous rivals, Fox, Grey, Sheridan, Windham, as they walked home after the long debate between six and seven on that April morning, agreed in thinking that they had just been witnesses to a display of almost super-human power. Against such an overwhelming impression, made at the moment on such hearers, the shafts of Coleridge's sneers fall blunted and broken.

Perhaps we cannot sum up our notice of Pitt's eloquence better than by quoting a few words by one of his friends. "Every part of his speaking, in sentiment, in language, and in delivery, evidently

bore the stamp of his character. All communicated a definite and varied apprehension of the qualities of strenuousness without bustle, unlaboured intrepidity, and severe greatness.”¹

But now, passing from the orator, can we convey any fair notion of the manners and bearing of the man? He was at least two men, one to the public at large, and one to his friends. To the public he seemed stiff and inordinately proud. “Pride,” says Macaulay, “pervaded the whole man, was written in the harsh, rigid lines of his face, was marked by the way in which he walked, in which he sate, in which he stood, and, above all, in which he bowed.”

The well-known description by Sir Nathaniel Wraxall is still almost startling. We ask how such a bearing was possible for so wise a leader, and how it could be tolerated—in plain words “stood”—by the high-spirited gentlemen whom he led. “In the formation of his person,” says Wraxall, “he was tall and slender, but without elegance or grace. In his manners, if not repulsive, he was cold, stiff, and without suavity or amenity. He seemed never to invite approach, or to encourage acquaintance, though, when addressed, he could be polite, communicative, and occasionally gracious. Smiles were not natural to him, even when seated on the Treasury Bench. . . . From the instant that Pitt entered the doorway of the House of Commons

¹ *Quarterly Review*, August 1810. Quoted by Brougham, vol. i. p. 206.

he advanced up the floor with a quick and firm step, his head erect and thrown back, looking neither to the right nor to the left, nor favouring with a nod or a glance any of the individuals seated on either side, among whom many who possessed £5000 a year would have been gratified even by so slight a mark of attention. It was not thus that Lord North or Fox treated Parliament," nor, we may add, Lord Althorp, Lord Palmerston, or some of their successors. His friends declared that this appearance of haughtiness was largely due to shyness, and loved to describe the charming companion that they knew in private life.

"The wittiest of men," says Wilberforce. "Endowed," says Wellesley, "beyond any man of his time whom I knew, with a gay heart and a social spirit." In short, wit, playfulness, liveliness of spirits, and sweet temper are the winning gifts on which they all agree.

I will give just three quotations in proof of this, and then ask you to return with me from the Siren of biography to the graver Muse of history.

The first is a story which may surprise and even shock some admirers of the majestic minister.

"He liked boys," says my authority, "and could put them at once and completely at their ease; and he joined in their games with genuine delight. On one occasion, his clever young niece, Lady Hester Stanhope, two boys of the Stanhope family, and young William Napier, afterwards the historian of the Peninsular War, were all staying in his

house at Putney. They determined to blacken the great statesman's face with burnt cork, which he strenuously resisted, belabouring his assailants with a cushion. In the midst of the boisterous scene a servant announced that Lord Castlereagh and Lord Liverpool desired to see the Prime Minister on business. They were ushered into another room, and the game still for some time continued, when Pitt said, 'We must not keep the grandees any longer waiting.' Water and a towel were brought; the face of the minister was washed; the basin was hid under a sofa, and his two colleagues were admitted. Young Napier was surprised at their deferential and almost obsequious manner, but much more at the sudden transformation that passed over Pitt. His tall, ungainly, bony figure seemed to grow to the ceiling, his head was thrown back, his eyes were fixed immovably, and apparently completely regardless of those who were before him. He listened to what they had to say, answered them in curt, cold sentences, and finally, with an abrupt, stiff inclination of the body, but without casting his eyes down, dismissed them. Then, turning to us with a laugh, he caught up his cushions, and renewed our fight."¹

The other two quotations are of a graver kind. His private secretary, Mr. Dacres Adams, writing of him to Lord Stanhope as recently as 1861, says: "He was surely a man whom it was quite impossible to know without loving him," like Burke's

¹ Lecky, v. 16, 17.

famous dictum on Fox, "a man made to be loved." "During his last administration, forsaken by old friends, which he bitterly felt, with declining health and almost the whole weight of the Government on his own shoulders, so delightful was his temper that, with all my shortcomings, no harsh word or look ever escaped him, but all towards me was kindness and indulgence."

Again, writing in 1806, just after his master's death: "At present my mind is wholly occupied with a grief that I never felt before, and an anguish that is inexpressible. It is not the loss of his vast talents and unexampled public services which affects me now, but the remembrance of his unnumbered kindnesses — of that goodness and gentleness of heart and manner, and of that purity of mind, which I never saw equalled in man."

The last words seem almost an echo of words of Wilberforce, written to a friend within three weeks of the death: "For personal purity, disinterestedness, integrity, and love of his country, I have never known his equal." Once more we may say, "Untarnished Chatham's genuine child, adieu!"

III

HIS SECOND PREMIERSHIP AND DEATH

OUR third and last chapter in the life of Pitt now begins. We left him still under twenty-five, having just scaled the pinnacle of power. We return to him when he is nearly forty-five, and has for two years been living in retirement at Walmer Castle, as Warden of the Cinque Ports. During that interval, his friend Addington has been Prime Minister, and the ten years' war with France has been ended for a time by the Peace of Amiens, that peace of dubious fame of which Sheridan said, in words that have become proverbial, "It is a peace at which everybody rejoices, and of which nobody is proud." It was, in truth, a breathing-time rather than a peace. Only one year after, on May 18, 1803, war was again declared. Already there is a general misgiving that Addington is not strong enough for his place, and that only one pilot is fit at such a time to meet the coming storm. The two wicked lines of Canning hit off what every one is feeling :

"Pitt is to Addington
As London is to Paddington."

At last, after much forbearance, Pitt himself is seriously uneasy. Our preparations, naval and military, are, he thinks, wholly inadequate. His health is much shaken. He has had one really serious attack. He keeps away from London, now at Walmer, now at Bath. But at length he feels it his duty to return to Parliament, the new Parliament which assembled last November. On May 23, the King's message on the new war is to be discussed. Pitt enters the House just as one of the ministers, Lord Hawkesbury, has spoken for an hour. All turn to look at him. Some two hundred new members have never yet heard him. Many repeat his name aloud. As he rises at twenty minutes before eight, there is at first a violent and almost universal cry of "Mr. Pitt, Mr. Pitt!" Every pause in his speech is greeted with a burst of cheering. "When he sat down at nine o'clock, there followed three of the longest, most eager, and most enthusiastic bursts of applause I ever heard in any place on any occasion." So writes the future Lord Dudley, then a young man who happened to be present. His testimony is confirmed by the best of all critics.

"Pitt's speech," Fox wrote a few days later, "was admired very much and very justly. I think it was the best he ever made in that style."

The "style" in question was that which was specially Pitt's own—lofty patriotic declamation, of which, during "the last half hour," there is said to have been "one unbroken torrent." By a

most unlucky accident no reporters were present that night, but we have Fox's second testimony, this time pronounced in the House of Commons, "If Demosthenes had been present, he must have admired, and might have envied."

A year was still to pass before the great orator was to return to power. Addington grew more and more "Paddingtonian." "If this ministry lasts," said the Russian Ambassador, "Great Britain will not last."

Early in May 1804, the King consulted Pitt as to forming a new ministry. Pitt long and earnestly urged that it should be as broad-bottomed as possible, including not only friends like Lord Grenville but also his lifelong opponent Mr. Fox. The King consented grudgingly to take Grenville, but would not hear of Fox; and as Fox's friends refused to come in without their chief, Pitt could only fall back on a few of his own personal adherents.

Fox behaved well at this crisis. He urged his friends to take office under Pitt and leave him excluded, but in vain.

Pitt expressed his sense of Fox's good feeling, but as to Grenville, his own cousin, and for so many years his intimate colleague, he thought himself aggrieved. "I will teach that proud man," he said to Lord Chancellor Eldon, "that in the service, and with the confidence of the King, I can do without him, though my health is such that it may cost me my life."

The allusion to his health is sad and prophetic.

Even a year before, when he made the great speech at the renewal of the war, Lord Dudley had used this significant language : " His physical powers are perceptibly impaired. He exhibits strong marks of bad health. Though his voice has not lost any of its depth and harmony, his lungs seem to labour in those prodigious sentences which he once thundered forth without effort, and which other men have neither the understanding to form nor the vigour to utter."

Thus, then, Pitt's second ministry began, with omens different indeed from those which ushered in the first, twenty years before. It lasted from May 1804 to January 1806. Its two chief events were, first, the great war with France, including Pitt's strenuous efforts to form a coalition of Europe against Napoleon, and, secondly, the impeachment of Henry Dundas, Viscount Melville.

This attack on his old colleague, though their friendship had of late seriously cooled, bore hardly on the Prime Minister.

We have a touching story by Wilberforce. He happened to call when the report on Melville's alleged malversations was just issued. " I shall never forget," he says, " the way in which Pitt seized it, and how eagerly he looked into the leaves, without waiting even to cut them open."

When the debate came on, Wilberforce, after long doubt, determined both to speak and to vote for the impeachment. He was sitting close to the Treasury Bench, and, as he turned towards the

Speaker, looked just across Mr. Pitt, who was watching with intense earnestness to catch the first intimation of the line which his old friend would take. "It required no little effort to resist the fascination of that penetrating eye." But Wilberforce stood firm. "We are," he said, "on our trial before the moral sense of England; and if we shrink from it, deeply shall we hereafter repent our conduct."

That memorable night, April 7, 1805, has a place of its own in parliamentary history. At four in the morning the House divided in breathless silence :

For the impeachment	216
Against	216

The Speaker gave his casting vote against the Government; and Melville, so long powerful, in Scotland all-powerful, was politically a fallen man. ;

"Your speech," writes a member to Wilberforce, "was said to influence forty votes. Mr. Pitt could not conceal his agitation when he saw the turn your speech was taking."

That Pitt felt the defeat most keenly is beyond dispute. An affecting incident is recorded by the second Lord Malmesbury. "I sat," he said, "wedged close to Pitt when we were 216 to 216; and the Speaker, Abbot, after looking as white as a sheet, and pausing for ten minutes, gave the casting vote against us. Pitt immediately put on the little cocked hat that he was in the habit of wearing when

dressed for the evening, and jammed it deeply over his forehead, and I distinctly saw the tears trickling down his cheeks. We had overheard one or two of the enemy say they would see 'how Billy looked after it.' A few young, ardent followers of Pitt, with myself, locked their arms together, and formed a circle, in which he moved, I believe unconsciously, out of the House, and none of those fellows could approach him."

Soon afterwards Pitt had to pass an ordeal which tried even his strong nerves. He rose in the House and said, "I have, Sir, felt it my duty to advise the erasure of Lord Melville's name from the list of privy councillors. I confess, sir, and I am not ashamed to confess it, that whatever may be my deference to the House of Commons, I certainly felt a deep and bitter pang in being compelled to be the instrument of rendering still more severe the punishment of the noble Lord." And then, I quote from Macaulay, "as he uttered the word 'pang,' his lip quivered, his voice shook, he paused—and his hearers thought that he was about to burst into tears. He suppressed his emotion, however, and proceeded with his usual self-possession." It is but just to add that Lord Melville, after a long trial before the House of Lords, was acquitted on all the charges.

During these painful weeks at home, another great Englishman, who, twenty-one years before, had boasted of being ¹ "as old as the Prime Minister, and as capable of commanding a ship as he was

¹ Southey's *Life of Nelson*, 1784.

of governing the State," was writing unconsciously the last page of his heroic and dazzling career. Nelson had been chasing the French fleet from the Mediterranean to the West Indies, and from the West Indies back to Europe. In August he landed at Portsmouth. At the end of that month we find him writing to Pitt, pressing the importance of acquiring Sardinia, and early in September he called upon him in Downing Street, where, by a mere chance, he met in the ante-room for the first and last time, the future hero of Waterloo.

Pitt asked him what force would be needed off Cadiz, and promised to send him as many ships as he required.

Nelson, when describing his interview, added, "Mr. Pitt paid me a compliment, which, I believe, he would not have paid to a Prince of the Blood. When I rose to go, he left the room with me, and attended me to the carriage."

The unseen shadows were gathering fast round the brows of these two great men. Neither of them was forty-seven years of age; but less than seven weeks of life remained for the one, less than five months for the other.

"On September 13," writes Nelson, in his Journal, "I drove from dear, dear Merton, where I left all that I hold dear in this world, to go to serve my King and country. May the great God, whom I adore, enable me to fulfil the expectations of my country!"

We all know how that prayer was fulfilled on October 21 off the shoals of Trafalgar.

Let us return to the statesman who, in Sir Walter Scott's words, "bade the conqueror go forth." During the next three weeks we can follow him in some detail. On October 29, eight days after Trafalgar, he sat for the last time for his portrait by Hoppner. Of this portrait, painted for Lord Mulgrave, many copies were taken during the next twelve months. One of them, presented by Lord Lonsdale, hangs in the drawing-room of Trinity Lodge. The likeness was by no means approved by Wilberforce and some other friends. It is strong and dignified, but it reveals failing health, as well as mental and moral power.

The news of the great battle, with the death of Nelson, reached London early on November 7. Pitt was roused from his bed to read Collingwood's dispatches. He was affected beyond his wont. For the first time in his life he could not calm his thoughts or recover sleep. He got up, though it was but three in the morning. Two days after came November 9, Lord Mayor's Day. During the morning Pitt wrote a very feeling letter to Nelson's brother, informing him that, to mark the King's sense of the great Admiral's transcendent and heroic services," His Majesty had resolved to make him an Earl.

In the evening of the same day there was the usual dinner at the Guildhall. On his way to the Mansion House Pitt was loudly cheered by the

mob. In Cheapside they took the horses from his carriage, and drew him themselves.

When the Lord Mayor proposed his health as "the saviour of Europe," he replied, "I return you many thanks for the honour you have done me; but Europe is not to be saved by any single man. England has saved herself by her exertions, and will, as I trust, save Europe by her example." They were the last words that he ever spoke in public. One of the guests who heard them was the future Duke of Wellington, then Sir Arthur Wellesley. Many years after he spoke of the scene to Lord Stanhope. "Pitt," he said, "was scarcely up two minutes, yet nothing could be more perfect."

No one suspected at the time that the hand of death was already upon him; yet little more than two months remained, and they were emphatically months of "labour and sorrow."

The fatal victory of Austerlitz, December 2, broke up the coalition between Austria and Russia which Pitt had so laboriously cemented. He was at Bath when he received the news, just at the end of the year.

"Tradition says," I quote here Lord Rosebery, "that he was looking at a picture gallery when he heard the furious gallop of a horse. 'That must be a courier,' he exclaimed, 'with news for me.' When he had opened the packet, he said, 'Heavy news indeed!' He hurriedly swallowed a cordial, or, says an eye-witness, he must have fainted.

He then asked for a map, and desired to be left alone."

This was the first moment of bodily weakness; but his secretary, Mr. Adams, who dined with him that same evening, thus testifies to his firmness of mind: "Depressed as Mr. Pitt was by his mortal illness, and the overthrow of all his hopes and labours for the rescue of Europe, I was struck by the wonderful fortitude with which he bore such a mental and bodily pull upon his nearly exhausted powers." ¹

However, from that fatal date he was, in fact, though he little suspected it, a dying man, with what Mr. Wilberforce pathetically called, "the Austerlitz look" in his face, "as much killed by the enemy as Nelson."

He returned to his house at Putney on the 11th of January, having taken three days over the fatiguing journey. As he entered—the story is well known—his eye rested on the map of Europe. "Roll up that map," he said, "it will not be wanted these ten years."

Three days afterwards he had an affecting interview with his old friend Marquess Wellesley, just returned from his brilliant government of India. He spoke to Wellesley in warm terms of his brother Arthur. "I never met any military officer with whom it was so satisfactory to converse. He states every difficulty before he undertakes any service, but none after he has undertaken it."

¹ Stanhope, *Miscell.*, p. 40.

The excitement of this interview was too much for the invalid. Before his visitor left the room, he fainted away.

Wellesley saw but too clearly that the last hour was not far distant. He went and prepared Lord Grenville for his cousin's approaching death. Grenville received the intelligence with the utmost feeling in an agony of tears, and immediately determined that all hostility in Parliament should be suspended.

Early in the morning of January 23, the great minister breathed his last. Just before, in a moment of sudden rally, he had said with a clear voice, "Oh, my country! How I leave my country!" They were his last words.

As we said before, on that very day, just twenty-five years earlier, he had first entered the House of Commons. A month after his death he was borne with stately pomp to the Abbey, and laid, as Macaulay writes, "near to the spot where his great father lay, near also to the spot where his rival Fox was soon to lie only eight months after."

Wilberforce, who carried the banner before the hearse, described the awful ceremony with deep feeling. As the coffin descended into the earth, he said, the eagle face of Chatham from above seemed "to look down with consternation into the grave of his favourite son, the dark house which was receiving all that remained of so much power and glory."

The years that immediately followed Pitt's death were gloomy years for Europe, but the gloom only served to increase the love and pride with which his memory was cherished by his country. In truth England would not have been England had she failed to revere the man who had never quailed in the hour of danger, who had never spared himself in the hours of sickness, and who, in a time of strange and unexampled convulsions, had taught her still to lift up her heart and calmly trust her institutions and herself.

It was the generous muse of the great Scotch poet which first did justice to the illustrious Englishman. Let his famous lines be our own last word, and let us recite them as a not unworthy epitaph :

“O think how to his latest day,
When Death, just hovering, claimed his prey,
With Palinure's unalter'd mood,
Firm at his dangerous post he stood ;
Each call for needful rest repell'd,
With dying hand the rudder held,
Till, in his fall, with fateful sway,
The steerage of the realm gave way !
Then, while on Britain's thousand plains
One unpolluted church remains,
Whose peaceful bells ne'er sent around
The bloody tocsin's maddening sound,
But still, upon the hallow'd day,
Convoke the swains to praise and pray ;
While faith and civil peace are dear,
Grace this cold marble with a tear—
He who preserved them, Pitt, lies here.”

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SPEECHES OF GEORGE CANNING

It requires some hardihood on the part of one who is not himself an Etonian to presume to speak to Eton boys on one of their most illustrious school-fellows. But the great kindness which has prompted your invitation, a kindness which I very deeply value, will, I know, secure for the essay of your guest a more than indulgent reception. Only I have been haunted by the misgiving, Will it all be an old story? Do Eton boys know already all that I can tell them of one who exactly a hundred years ago was the most brilliant Eton boy of his day? Full of this misgiving, I met a distinguished old Etonian a few days since at the Athenæum, and timidly asked him, with what he evidently took for Harrovian naïveté, whether quotations from Canning's speeches were the permanent stock-in-trade of every Eton boy. He answered by a well-bred smile, which, without disclosing more than was discreet and patriotic, allowed me gently to hope that my fears were perhaps exaggerated.

Let me confess, Gentlemen, that, even apart from this kindly smile, one other thought—nay, a memory rather than a thought—has emboldened

me to submit to your notice this evening the particular subject which I have chosen. It so happens that just sixty-two years ago the then Headmaster of Harrow was a visitor to Eton on the 4th of June. He had there the honour of being introduced for the first time to the most distinguished statesman of the day. This eminent statesman offered to act as cicerone to the stranger, and showed him the several beauties of Eton with the courtesy at once and the boyish glee of an old Etonian. The conversation was protracted, and seemed to interest both parties. It ended by a respectful suggestion on the part of the visitor that the statesman should permit his speeches to be published. The request was then and there granted, on one condition, that the petitioner should undertake the labour of correcting the proofs for the press. And with that understanding the two parted, but never to meet again. The statesman, as you will already have divined, was none other than your famous schoolfellow, George Canning, then just three years distant from the end of his brilliant career. The Headmaster of Harrow, who on that gracious day was permitted almost to feel himself an Etonian, was my own dear and honoured father. The pleasure which he then received from Mr. Canning's kindness, and of which he often spoke to his children, is, perhaps, the innermost cause of my venturing to-day to unfold to an Eton audience some of the beauties of Canning's eloquence.

And now let us come to closer quarters. I am

not about to offer you either a history of Canning's life, or an elaborate criticism of his character as a statesman. It is chiefly as an orator that I would ask you to regard him ; but I should do him a grievous wrong if I allowed you to imagine that he was mainly an orator and but little of a statesman. Listen to the words of an Eton tutor, who wrote as follows some six years ago :¹ "It is customary to make too much of eloquence. Apart from character, eloquence is not very highly esteemed by men of strong head. The character of Mr. Pitt, the less majestic but more genial character of Mr. Fox, expressed themselves in luminous oratory which had a fine afterglow. . . . Oratory, like boxing, was then fashionable at the English Universities ; and even at a public school, lads, without the guidance of teachers, debated questions of politics, morals, and taste ; and these mimicries began to savour of reality in the days of Mr. Canning's ascendancy, when the doors of Parliament were creaking to the winds of public spirit. Mr. Canning liked taking a student with him to the House of Commons, and treating him as one capable of watching the business."

So far the gifted Eton ex-tutor. For myself, I find it difficult, when speaking at Eton, to apologise for magnifying the office of the parliamentary orator, so pertinaciously has Eton persisted for at least a century and a half in main-

¹ *A Guide to Modern English History*, by W. Cory. Part I., page 130.

taining an oratorical supremacy in the two Houses of Parliament. From the time of Chatham to the present day the oratorical succession has never been interrupted. Chatham was succeeded by Charles Fox ; Fox by Grey and Canning ; Canning by Stanley, the late Lord Derby, of whom Macaulay wrote that in him " the science of parliamentary debate resembled an instinct " ; and you do not need that I should name the Etonian¹ at the present day who, remembering in his boyhood the speeches of Mr. Canning while a guest at his father's house in Liverpool, now, at an interval of sixty years, sways the House of Commons at his will. We may be pardoned, therefore, if, in this home and cradle of oratory, we regard for the moment one of her most brilliant sons as an orator, even more than as a statesman. We might quote his speeches to explain his acts. We prefer on this occasion to name a few of his acts in order to interpret some extracts from his speeches.

First, then, let me try to give you the briefest possible outline of his life. He was born in 1770, he died in 1827, just four short months after being appointed Prime Minister. Thus you see he was but fifty-seven when he died, the same age which proved fatal to Richelieu and Charles Fox. He went to Eton when he was twelve years old, and left it for Christ Church at eighteen. Among his contemporaries here was the Duke of Wellington, who was one year his senior ; whose greatness in

¹ Of course Mr. Gladstone.

after years so often, as we shall see, kindled his eloquence ; whose alienation, when at last the Premiership was won, embittered his spirit, and not improbably hastened his end.

In 1793, the memorable *Quatre vingt-treize*, the year of so many awful crimes and so much unsurpassed heroism, he was first introduced to Mr. Pitt. Mr. Pitt informed him that, if his views were in accordance with those of the Government, means would be found for bringing him into Parliament. The young man, fresh from college, accepted the offer, and remained faithful to Pitt till his early death in 1806. From that date he recognised no political master. As he said afterwards to his constituents at Liverpool in 1812, "My political allegiance lies buried in his grave."

The life of Canning, as you will see, covers the following great events : the French Revolution and the war with Napoleon ; the long forty years' struggle against, first, the Slave-Trade, and then Slavery itself ; the Union with Ireland, followed by the Thirty Years War, as one may call it, for the relief of the Roman Catholics. To these events may be added the inauguration of a new foreign policy of which freedom was the watchword, and the first mutterings, threatening but as yet indistinct, of parliamentary reform. As to these subjects, it may perhaps be useful to say at the outset—if I do not a little insult your historical omniscience—that Canning was throughout an eager partisan of the war, a firm supporter of the

claims of the Roman Catholics, and a sincere, if not a very active, advocate of the great and sacred cause of Wilberforce and Buxton. Further, during the last four years of his life, while he held the seals of the Foreign Office, his name was identified with the name of liberty in Portugal, in the Spanish-American Republics, and not least in Greece. On the other hand, he was no believer in parliamentary reform. The House of Commons, as it then was, commanded his reverence and satisfied his creed. With this brief sketch, I propose to bring before you some of his best known utterances.

I

AND first, as to the war and the sentiment of patriotism. Canning is perhaps never quite so much himself as when he is giving vent to those sentiments of national pride which stamp the oratory of Demosthenes and the history of Rome. Whether he does this in a vulgar or blatant spirit—a spirit for which our age has invented an epithet more jingling than graceful—I must leave you to judge; but Canning, apart from the sentiment of national pride, would be as unintelligible as Wellington without civic duty, or Selwyn and Patteson without Christian daring.

This is what he says of Nelson and the Nile in 1798, when Under-Secretary for foreign affairs: “That the confidence of the country is indeed high, I am happy to acknowledge. But that this spirit has started suddenly out of the late victory, I cannot agree. It was confirmed indeed by that victory, but it adds new lustre to the character of the country, it places in a more conspicuous light the talents and reputation of Lord Nelson, that before we were in possession of the confidence which grew out of his victory, we had the confidence to, *presume* it. Let us recollect only the days and

months of anxiety which we passed before the intelligence of that memorable event had reached us. It was an anxiety, not of apprehension, but of impatience. Our prayers were put up not for success, but for an opportunity of deserving it. We asked not that Nelson might conquer Bonaparte, but that Bonaparte might not have the triumph of deceiving and escaping him ; not that we might gain the battle, but that we might find the enemy ; for the rest we had nothing to fear :

‘Concurrant pariter cum ratibus rates ;
Spectent numina ponti, et
Palmam, qui meruit, ferat.’”

Or, if the tone of this earlier eloquence seem to you what our American friends call a little “high-falutin,” look on fifteen years, from 1798 to 1813. Turn from Nelson to your own Wellington. During the interval Pitt has died, and three Etonians—Grenville, Fox, and Grey—have headed the new ministry of “all the talents.” On their fall, Canning has become Foreign Secretary, and holds his post for three years, from 1807 to 1809, till the day of his ill-starred duel with his colleague, Castlereagh. During that administration there have been days of gloom—Sir John Moore’s retreat on Corunna, the disaster of Walcheren, the ever advancing flood of the domination of Napoleon. And then the tide begins to turn, and the eager statesman, no longer in office—declining office, as we shall see hereafter, on grounds of conscience—

watches the fulfilment of the brave hopes which he had never abandoned, watches the marvellous advance of his old schoolfellow from conquest to conquest, till at last on July 7, 1813, a vote of thanks is moved to the Marquess of Wellington for "the splendid and decisive victory of Vittoria, when the French army was completely routed, with the loss of all its artillery, stores, and baggage." It was on this occasion that Mr. Canning rose, and, after proudly arguing that not to Spain alone would the effects of the late victory be confined, delivered that sentence which is said to have electrified the House: "The mighty deluge, by which the Continent has been so long overwhelmed, begins to subside. The limits of nations are again visible, and the spires and turrets of ancient establishments begin to reappear above the subsiding wave."

Can you bear yet one more allusion to Wellington ?

Seven months have passed since Vittoria. We have reached the January of 1814. Mr. Canning has been entertained by his constituents at Liverpool. Two years before, when for the first time they elected him, all looked dark and dreary, but he bated no jot of hope. Now the year of the redeemed has come. "Gentlemen," he cries, "I should be ashamed to appear before you shouting in the train of success, if I had not encouraged you to patience under difficulties. In that year, 1812, the pressure upon this country was undoubtedly painful. Had we yielded, the continental system would have been immortal. We persevered, and

before the conclusion of another year, the system was at an end, like the breaking up of a winter's frost. But yesterday, the whole Continent, like a mighty plain covered with one mass of ice, presented to the view a drear expanse of barren uniformity; to-day, the breath of heaven unbinds the earth, the streams begin to flow again, and the intercourse of human kind revives. . . . I know not why, six weeks hence, such a peace should not be made as England may not only be glad but proud to ratify. Not such a peace as that of Amiens—a short, feverish interval of unrefreshing repose. But let a peace be made to-morrow such as the Allies have now the power to dictate, and the meanest of the subjects of this kingdom shall not walk the streets of Paris without being pointed out as the compatriot of Wellington, as one of that nation whose firmness and perseverance have humbled France and rescued Europe.”

II

WE turn to our second topic. It is necessarily less thrilling, still it must have its interest; I mean the Union with Ireland and the claims of the Roman Catholics. Let me remind you that these two questions are inseparably connected. I might show this by a few sentences of my own. I prefer to give you the words of Canning. Speaking in March 1827, in the last speech which he delivered before he became Prime Minister, he thus refers to what had passed a quarter of a century before: "I perfectly concur," he says, "in the opinion advanced by some honourable gentlemen that nothing was at any time said or done by Mr. Pitt tantamount to a positive pledge that, when the Union of Ireland and England was effected, the concessions to the Catholics would be yielded. But I am also ready to admit that there were some *quasi* promises, or conditional intimations, calculated to excite in the Roman Catholic people a hope, which has unfortunately hitherto proved to be 'the hope deferred that maketh the heart sick.' I am aware that at the time of the Union Mr. Pitt was careful to make no promises that could be confounded with positive engagements; but to

this fact I cannot shut my eyes, that, directly or indirectly, the Roman Catholics were made to believe, and that belief was a powerful inducement with them to lend their aid towards the accomplishment of the measure, that in the Imperial Parliament the question which so nearly concerned them would be more favourably entertained. Some persons professed to doubt whether Mr. Pitt was warm and sincere on the subject of Emancipation. I well remember, as well as if it happened only yesterday, Mr. Pitt's showing me a letter from Lord Cornwallis, stating that he thought he might carry the Union, but not Catholic Emancipation. In the presumption of youth I exclaimed, 'Then abandon the Union!' Mr. Pitt rebuked me as I deserved to be rebuked. He carried the Union, but although he failed in carrying the question of Catholic Emancipation, there is no tribunal, however solemn, before which I am not prepared to depose to my firm belief in the sincerity of Mr. Pitt's wishes and intentions to carry it."

Some of you, my younger friends, may perhaps here ask, Why then did he not carry it? The answer is, because of the insurmountable objection of George III. The King would not hear of it, and so in 1801 Mr. Pitt stepped down from the ministerial throne on which he had sat, unshaken and almost undisturbed, for seventeen years. He proved his sincerity by immediate resignation. When he returned to power in 1804, much had happened in the three years' interval. I do not refer to the

passing of the Peace of Amiens—that “Peace at which every one rejoiced, but of which nobody could be proud”—or again to the renewal of the war. I refer to the serious illness of the King. It was this sad incident, the reappearance of the King’s mental derangement, which, rightly or wrongly, induced Mr. Pitt, on becoming again Prime Minister, to give a virtual pledge that he would not reopen the question during the lifetime of his aged Sovereign. In less than two years from that date he himself died.

But I must not speak further of the Catholic question on its own merits. I wish to show you the line which Mr. Canning adopted. You will find that it was throughout a line of self-sacrifice. In 1812, after the assassination of Mr. Perceval, Mr. Canning and Lord Wellesley were charged by the Prince Regent to attempt to form a Cabinet. The attempt broke down, mainly because they were both devoted to the Catholic claims, and the Protestant adherents of the late Premier were disinclined to serve under their leadership. Eventually those adherents resumed office under Lord Liverpool, an intimate friend of Canning’s from Oxford days. Lord Liverpool at once offered him the post of Foreign Secretary, of course on the clear understanding that Canning would be personally free to maintain and advocate his well-known views on the Catholic claims. Canning, however, declined, because he found that the Cabinet were determined to resist as one man the consideration of the subject.

This refusal of office in this eventful year is one of the hinges of his life. He often refers to it, and always with feeling. In February 1825, Mr. Goulburn moved, "That leave be given to bring in a Bill to amend certain Acts relating to Unlawful Societies in Ireland." Mr. Canning's speech on this occasion may be specially recommended to those who wish to understand his career and his character. It is full of history, full of self-revelation, and, what boys at some schools value hardly less, full of wit. There is one passage in particular, too long to be read, in which he elaborately quizzes the philosophical Sir James Mackintosh, who had urged that in some strange way men are led to virtue by the instrumentality of their conflicting vices. On this singular theory Mr. Canning fastens the tooth of his wit, and proves to Sir James that if he had been *only* a Whig or *only* a Scotchman, he would have been, in the judgment of Dr. Johnson, cited by Mackintosh as "a good hater," a highly objectionable personage; but that fortunately being *both*, the great moralist would have said to him, 'Sir, you are too much of a Whig to be a good Scotchman; and, Sir, you are too much a Scotchman to be a good Whig.'" And then the orator thus pleasantly removes his venomless fang from the easily forgiven wound: "It is no doubt from the collision of these two evils in my learned friend's person that he has become what I, and all who have the happiness of meeting him at the Club, find him—an entirely faultless character."

May I be pardoned for adding a little anecdote as regards this extract, of which I have only given you the conclusion? Some years ago it was delivered, and I may say very gracefully delivered, by a young orator at our Harrow speeches. As he sat down, Mr. Gladstone, who was seated at my left, good-humouredly whispered, "It is very clever, but it would not succeed in the present House of Commons." From such an authority there is no appeal.

But we were speaking of Canning's refusal of office in 1812. This is what he himself says of it in the speech which I have just quoted for a lighter purpose: "That refusal, Sir, was not quite an ordinary effort. I had at that moment a temptation to take office, more powerful perhaps than I have felt at any other period of my political life. There are circumstances which excuse, in generous minds, a strong desire for power; and such precisely were the circumstances under which office was now tendered to my acceptance. I had been Secretary of State during the first years of the war in the Peninsula. I had been in a measure the author of that animating but difficult struggle. I had anticipated, even in the hour of the deepest gloom, a brighter period, when the gale of fortune would yet set in gloriously and prosperously for the great cause in which we were embarked. In 1812 the prospect had begun to clear; and the cause which I had so long advocated under less auspicious circumstances appeared to promise, even to less

sanguine eyes, those brilliant results which ultimately crowned it, And, Sir, I desire to ask any man who hears me, and who has within him the heart of an English gentleman, animated by a just desire to serve his country, whether greater temptation to take office could possibly be held out to any one than was at that time held out to me, at the very moment when I might have come in to reap the fruits of the harvest which I had sown under the lowering atmosphere of distrust and discouragement, and the early and ungenial growth of which I had watched with such intense anxiety? At such a moment I was called to resume my station in the councils of my country; but the answer of the Cabinet being what it was on the Catholic question, I declined the call. Was this to sacrifice my conscience and the Catholic cause to the love of office? "

There are times, Gentlemen, when egotism becomes touching at least, and almost noble. In future you will remember what it was which kept Canning in a private station from 1812 to 1816; what it was which alone prevented the great Eton statesman from penning the dispatches which sent the great Eton soldier from Salamanca to Vittoria, from Vittoria to Paris, from Paris to Vienna, and from Vienna to Waterloo.

I am quite sure that your hearts will have followed *this* act of self-sacrifice, due to the Catholic question. There is yet another to be named with which, I must confess, my own heart has a yet

keener sympathy. It is stated in the same remarkable speech, as if for a moment the leader of the House of Commons stepped aside into the parliamentary confessional, and there remembered and unveiled the trials and temptations of his youth.

“From the earliest dawn,” he says, “of my public life—ay, from the first visions of youthful ambition”—does Christ Church, do you think, here rise before him, or is it a yet earlier and more beloved nursing mother?—“from the first visions of youthful ambition, that ambition had been directed to one object above all others. Before that object all others vanished into comparative insignificance; it was desirable to me beyond all the blandishments of power, beyond all the rewards and favours of the Crown. That object was to represent in this House the University in which I was educated. I had a fair chance of accomplishing this object, when the Catholic question crossed my way. I was warned, fairly and kindly warned, that my adoption of that cause would blast my prospect. I adhered to the Catholic cause, and forfeited all my long-cherished hopes and expectations. Sir, the representation of the University has fallen into worthier hands. I rejoice with my Right Honourable friend near me (Mr. Peel) in the high honour which he has attained. Long may he enjoy the distinction, and long may it prove a source of reciprocal pride to our parent University and to himself. Never till this hour have I stated, either in public or in private, the extent of this

irretrievable sacrifice ; but I have not felt it the less deeply. It is past, and I shall speak of it no more."

Surely generous and pathetic words—words which, as Peel said many years afterwards of the speech of his old schoolfellow Palmerston—"make us proud of the man that uttered them." *Pathetic* but not *prophetic*.

Ah ! if in that year, 1825, the veil of the future—ay, of the *near* future—could have been uplifted, what strange visions would have been disclosed ! Within two years from that time, Canning was to be borne to his grave at Westminster, the Catholic question still unsolved, but consecrated by one more painful sacrifice, the alienation of almost all his colleagues. And within yet another two years, Peel and Wellington, who stood aloof from him at the crisis of his destiny because he was true to the Catholic cause, were themselves forced to grant the Emancipation for which he had so long vainly striven ; while the friend, who had been so chivalrously congratulated on his secure tenure of the representation of Oxford, was cast forth for ever from the seat which Canning had once coveted but could not honourably hold.

III

BUT I have detained you, perhaps, too long with such melancholy musings on the frailty and fragility of political ties. As Charles Fox said, when he heard that his great rival Pitt was at the point of death, "*Sunt lacrimae rerum, et mentem mortalia tangunt.*" Let us, however abruptly, pass to another topic, the topic of Parliamentary Reform.

In April 1822, Lord John Russell, then a young man of thirty, had the boldness to move, "That the present state of the representation of the people in Parliament requires the most serious consideration of the House."

Mr. Canning had just been appointed Governor-General of India, and was shortly to leave England. Why this purpose was never carried out, we shall see in the sequel. His speech on this occasion is, from an oratorical point of view, among his best. He is speaking from his heart. He was thoroughly proud of the Constitution as it then stood, and never believed that it could do its work more efficiently by a larger admixture of popular control. I can but refer you to the peroration. You will all appreciate its literary beauty. Some of you may believe that you detect the fallacy which impairs

its value as a political argument. "A search," he says, "after abstract perfection in Government may produce in generous minds an enterprise and enthusiasm to be recorded by the historian and to be celebrated by the poet; but such perfection is not an object of reasonable pursuit, because it is not one of possible attainment; and never yet did a passionate struggle after an absolutely unattainable object fail to be productive of misery to an individual, of madness and confusion to a people. As the inhabitants of those burning climates which lie beneath a tropical sun sigh for the coolness of the mountain and the grove, so (all history instructs us) do nations, which have basked for a time in the torrent blaze of an unmitigated liberty, too often call upon the shades of despotism, even of military despotism, to cover them—

'O qui me gelidis in vallibus Haemi
Sistat, et ingenti ramorum protegat umbra!'—

a protection which blights while it shelters, which dwarfs the intellect and stunts the energies of man, but to which a wearied nation willingly resorts from intolerable heats and from perpetual danger of convulsion. *Our* lot is happily cast in the temperate zone of freedom, the clime best suited to the development of the moral qualities of the human race; to the cultivation of their faculties, and to the security as well as the improvement of their virtues. Let us be sensible of the advantages which it is our happiness to enjoy. Let us guard

with pious gratitude the flame of genuine liberty, that fire from heaven, of which our Constitution is the holy depository ; and let us not, for the chance of rendering it more intense and more radiant, impair its purity or hazard its extinction ! ”

And then, with the sympathy which Canning always feels for youth and youthful promise, the veteran statesman turns to his young opponent, little foreseeing that within ten years the changes which seemed to him so visionary would, mainly through the skill and courage of those prentice hands, be embodied for ever in the famous Reform Bill. “ The noble Lord,” he graciously continues, “ is entitled to the acknowledgments of the House for the candid, able, and ingenious manner in which he has brought forward his motion. . . . That he will carry his motion this evening, I have no fear ; but with the talents which he has shown himself to possess, and with (I sincerely hope) a long and brilliant career of parliamentary distinction before him, he will no doubt renew his efforts hereafter. Although I presume not to expect that he will give any weight to observations or warnings of mine, yet on this, probably the last, opportunity which I shall have of raising my voice on the question of Parliamentary Reform, while I conjure the House to pause before it consents to adopt the proposition of the noble Lord, I cannot help conjuring the noble Lord himself to pause before he again presses it upon the country. If, however, he shall persevere, and if his perseverance shall be successful,

and if the results of that success shall be such as I cannot help apprehending—his be the triumph to have precipitated those results, be mine the consolation that, to the utmost and the latest of my power, I have opposed them.”

The motion was lost by a majority of 105—269 to 164.

IV

THIS protest against Parliamentary Reform was, as we have seen, delivered in April 1822. We look on a few months. Mr. Canning, now Foreign Secretary, is at Plymouth, in 1823, to be presented with the freedom of that historic town, so rich in records of naval heroism. It is on this occasion that he gives utterance to perhaps the most brilliant, and certainly the most happily appropriate, of all the famous passages to be found in his oratory. It is a time of peace. Some think we ought to have used threatening words in the counsels of Europe during the last troubled months. Meanwhile, there are the ships of war lying in the great harbour—silent, calm, restful, but not dead. Canning, the friend of peace, but not afraid of war, is inspired by the scene—by its stirring memories, by its possible prophecies. “Our present repose,” he says, “is no more a proof of inability to act than the state of inertness and inactivity in which I have seen those mighty masses that float in the waters above your town is a proof they are devoid of strength, and incapable of being fitted out for action. You well know, Gentlemen, how soon one of those stupendous masses, now reposing on their

shadows in perfect stillness—how soon, upon any call of patriotism or of necessity, it would assume the likeness of an animated thing, instinct with life and motion, how soon it would ruffle, as it were, its swelling plumage, how quickly it would put forth all its beauty and its bravery, collect its scattered elements of strength, and awaken its dormant thunder. Such as is one of these magnificent machines, when springing from inaction into a display of its might ; such is England herself, while apparently passive and motionless she silently concentrates the power to be put forth on an adequate occasion. But God forbid that that occasion should arise ! After a war sustained for nearly a quarter of a century, sometimes single-handed, and with all Europe arranged at times against her, or at her side, England needs a period of tranquillity, and may enjoy it without fear of misconstruction.”

V

No sketch of Canning's oratory, however slight, would be even tolerably faithful unless it at least referred to one of its most marked characteristics, its playfulness and its wit. Canning retained through life much of the schoolboy—shall I seem impertinently analytical if I presume to add, much of the *Eton* schoolboy? He was not always dignified or always self-contained. There was in him an element of levity which was not invariably weighted with decorum. If I mistake not, I discern at the farther end of this beautiful library the bust of your brilliant and versatile poet, Winthrop Mackworth Praed. Somewhere, if I remember rightly, he expresses a wish to

“run away
From House and Court and Levée,
Where bearded men appear to-day
Just Eton boys grown heavy.”

Well, my friends, Canning always remained the “Eton boy,” but, happily for the world, he never “grew heavy.” He was always charming and engaging. The author of the “Knave of Hearts” in your *Microcosm*, of the “Needy Knife-Grinder,” and the “University of Göttingen” in the *Anti-*

Jacobin, was through life one of those bright spirits whose wit and irony continued to fascinate the House of Commons. Take a few instances. There was, I fear, some flippant impertinence, but there was also much picturesque truth, in the irreverent comparison of the two Prime Ministers,

“Pitt is to Addington
As London is to Paddington.”

There was wisdom as well as wit in the lively image, “Away with the cant of ‘measures not men!’, the idle supposition that it is the harness and not the horses that draw the chariot along.” There was solid humour in the description of hopeless mental confusion—not perhaps wholly unknown in the geography classes of even some great schools—as illustrated by the anecdote of the gentleman of Naples. This well-informed foreigner once asked an English traveller whether you could not travel to England from Sicily by land. “Certainly not,” said the Englishman, “you know that you cannot go to England even from Naples without crossing the sea.” “That is very true,” replied the Italian, “but *Sicily is an Island too*.”

Mr. Canning could tell a story in Parliament with great effect. His description in 1824 of “the heavy Falmouth Coach,” conveying to the place of embarkation the bulky form of Lord Nugent, “who was about to carry the succour of his person to the struggling patriots of Spain,” and to “throw his weight into the sinking scale of the Cortes,”—

this picture, elaborately drawn and doubtless imper-
turbably exhibited by the artist, is said not only
to have convulsed the House of Commons at each
grave but ludicrous touch, but also to have for
once thrown into a fit of uncontrollable merriment
no less a man than William Wilberforce. As he
left the House, and went to his carriage, he could
not get over the haunting image of the heavy
Falmouth coach and its heavily armed inhabitant,
wearing on his head the gigantic helmet of the
Castle of Otranto.

Of a piece with this drollery is the story of the
painter of *the Red Lion*, who was as much in love
with his one subject of art as the new-furbishers
of the Constitution were with their one nostrum of
Parliamentary Reform. "Moderate Reformers"
were for a *small* instalment of Reform; and so this
artist of one idea, when asked to decorate a small
panel over the chimney-piece of a library with
something delicate and in keeping, could only
suggest, "What think you of a *small red lion*?"

But I must not forget that I am speaking to an
august and dignified audience. Two more instances
of Canning's wit, and we will return to graver
latitudes.

The first is only worth recording because of the
painful circumstances under which the jest was
uttered. It was on May 4, 1827. The new Prime
Minister, barely three weeks in office, was, to use
an expressive word, almost "badgered" to death,
suffering acutely in body and mind, sensitive to

every sneer, embittered by every desertion. One of his tormentors, Mr. Dawson, after taunting him with the intriguing spirit in which he had filled up some of the offices of the new ministry, ended by moving for "copies of the patents of the Master of the Mint and the Judge Advocate." And this was the answer which he got for his pains. It might have appeared forty years before in the jaunty pages of the *Microcosm*. "As to the motion of the honourable gentleman for the production of the patent, I know not how it can have the effect of satisfying his anxiety, unless it be, according to the old Cambridge problem, that, the masts and guns of the ship being given, and dividing by the men, you may get at the name of the captain. I hope the honourable gentleman may now perceive that he cannot succeed in putting me out of temper, and that the House will be permitted to recur to the order of the day."

The one remaining instance of wit that I shall bring before you is of a far higher kind, and has become almost proverbial. Canning is taunted in 1826 with having departed in one instance from the principles of his great master, Mr. Pitt. After urging that in this one exceptional case Pitt was undoubtedly in error, he thus beautifully continues: "It is singular to remark how ready some people are to admire in a great man the *exception* rather than the *rule* of his conduct. Such perverse worship is like the *idolatry of barbarous nations*, who can see the noonday splendour of the sun

without emotion ; but who, when he is in eclipse, come forward with hymns and cymbals to adore him. Thus there are those who venerate Mr. Pitt less in the brightness of his meridian glory than under his partial obscurations, and who gaze on him with the fondest admiration when he has accidentally ceased to shine."

VI

GENTLEMEN, we have already ranged together over a wide and diversified tract of country, but there is still one hill of surpassing interest which I must ask your wearied feet to climb.

Mr. Canning was not only one of the first of Parliamentary orators, he was also by general consent one of the ablest of Foreign Secretaries.

As we have seen, he was in 1822 about to start for India as Governor-General. In July a splendid gift of plate was presented to him by his many admirers at Liverpool. The ship was ready to take him. Every arrangement for her sailing was completed, when suddenly one of those melancholy events occurred which alter the history not of men only but of nations. The Foreign Secretary at that time was Lord Londonderry, his old colleague and long-reconciled opponent, Castlereagh. This unhappy statesman, "irritated, over-worked, and about to set out for the Congress of Vienna to remonstrate against acts which he had been unable to prevent," committed suicide. Mr. Canning was at once called upon to resume those seals of office which he had held from 1807 to 1809, and which, as you will not have forgotten, he had declined in

1812. His hour had at last come. The four and a half years which follow are by far the most interesting of his political life. They show him at his best—daring, discreet, prompt, resolute, in hearty sympathy with the spirit of freedom abroad which was then so coarsely threatened by the sanctimonious selfishness of the Holy Alliance.

I must not dwell at any length on this page of history. It is clearly and pointedly written by Sir Henry Bulwer in his well-known *Character of Canning*. It is sketched with characteristic grace and shrewdness by an Etonian to whom I have already referred, a dear and valued friend of my own and of not a few here present, the tutor, if I mistake not, and certainly the admired friend, of our present Foreign Secretary, I mean Mr. William Cory, better known here as William Johnson. To the animated pages of these two writers I must refer those who wish to follow the stirring events of those memorable years.

It is with Mr. Canning's speeches that we have briefly to deal. Forty-eight hours after he was appointed Foreign Secretary, the Duke of Wellington started for the Congress of Verona as the envoy and mouthpiece of England. The question which then engaged the attention of the allied Sovereigns of Russia, Austria, and Prussia was the rising of Spanish Liberals against their Bourbon Sovereign. The French Government, that of the unteachable Bourbon Louis XVIII., was prepared to send an army to Spain to put the rising down. The adhesion

of England was eagerly looked for by the allied Despots. Mr. Canning's instructions to the great military envoy of England, only seven years after Waterloo, were clear and decided. "If there be a determined project to interfere by force or by menace in the present struggle in Spain, so convinced are His Majesty's Government of the uselessness and danger of any such interference, so objectionable does it appear to them in principle, as well as utterly impracticable in execution, that when the necessity arises, or (I would rather say) when the opportunity offers, I am to instruct your Grace at once frankly and peremptorily to declare, that to any such interference, come what may, His Majesty will not be a party."

Bold and barely diplomatic words. A grievous surprise and disappointment to those whom Lord Brougham called "the Three Gentlemen of Verona," a delight and refreshment to all Englishmen who loved to hear their country speak abroad in the tone and with the accents of freedom.

Then followed a second stroke with the same ring. Mr. Canning resolved to recognise, not much to the taste of any Bourbon Prince, those Spanish Republics in South America which had declared themselves independent of Spain.

Then, again, came the Greek struggle for independence, the struggle to which, as you know, Lord Byron devoted the latest and perhaps the best spent months of his romantic career. Here, also, the sympathies of England, as expressed by her

high-spirited Minister, were not allowed to appear doubtful.

And then followed, at the close of 1826, an event and a speech which thrilled all Europe. Portugal was threatened by armed aggression on the part of Spain. She applied to England for that help to which by more than one treaty she was entitled. Her claim was good in law, and further, it touched the sympathies of the nation. This is how Mr. Canning made himself the spokesman of England on December 12, 1826, in a speech which is perhaps his best. First he showed, by one citation after another, the binding effect of various treaties. Then he turned to meet the criticism of certain opponents. "I understand," he said, "that in some quarters it has been imputed to His Majesty's Ministers that an extraordinary delay intervened between the taking of the determination to give assistance to Portugal and the carrying of that determination into effect. But how stands the fact? On Sunday, the 3rd of this month, we received from the Portuguese Ambassador a direct and formal demand of assistance against a hostile aggression from Spain. Our answer was that, although rumours had reached us through France, His Majesty's Government had not that accurate information, that official and precise intelligence of facts, on which they could properly found an application to Parliament. It was only on last Friday night that this precise information arrived. On Saturday His Majesty's confidential servants

came to a decision. On Sunday that decision received the sanction of His Majesty. On Monday it was communicated to both Houses of Parliament; and this day, Sir—at the hour in which I have the honour of addressing you—the troops are on their march for embarkation.”

There is a solid tramp in this rapid march of well-ordered facts that reminds one of not a few passages, notably the *Ἑσπέρα μὲν γὰρ ἦν*—have any here lately read it?—in the Crown of Demosthenes.

And now for the well-known close of this great speech. It is too long to quote in full. Perhaps some rising orator here present has already bespoken it for the coming 4th of June. How I should like to hear it from the lips of some young schoolfellow of Canning, as I have heard it, not once only, from the less privileged lips of the young schoolfellows of Aberdeen and Palmerston. But *fata obstant!* Let me only just remind you of its general tenour. Here it is that the orator enunciates, in language as chaste as it is lofty, his noble defence of England's neutrality, his lively appreciation of the perils and miseries of a new European war. Here, too, it is that he gives utterance to his famous prophecy, that the next war kindled in Europe will be a war not so much of armies as of opinions, and admits that “the contemplation of this new *power* in the future excites his most anxious apprehensions.” Here we meet that fine proverbial saying, so worthy of the conscious greatness of an imperial State,

“It is one thing to have a giant’s strength, but it would be another to use it like a giant.” Here, too, is the majestic picture of England wielding the sceptre of the Ruler of the Winds,

*Celsa sedet Aeolus arce,
Sceptra tenens,*

holding in her grasp, but refusing to send forth, the stormy passions of rival nations.

And then he ends—and I have heard bystanders describe the kindling of his eye and the flush of his brow—“This, then, is the reason—a reason very different from fear—why I dread the recurrence of hostilities in any part of Europe; why I would bear much, and would forbear long; why I would put up with almost anything that did not touch national faith and national honour; rather than let slip the furies of war, the leash of which we hold in our hands, not knowing whom they may reach, or how far their ravages may be carried.

“I return in conclusion to the object of the address. Let us fly to the aid of Portugal, by whomsoever attacked, because it is our duty to do so, and let us cease our interference where that duty ends. We go to Portugal, not to rule, not to dictate, not to prescribe constitutions, but to defend and to preserve the independence of an ally. We go to plant the standard of England on the well-known heights of Lisbon. Where that standard is planted, foreign dominion shall not come.”

The best criticism on this speech is to be found

in the generous words of the orator's most brilliant antagonist, Mr. Brougham. Often had those two great rivals been matched against each other. Only the year before, Mr. Canning had himself said of his opponent, as Pitt might have said of Fox, or Gladstone of Disraeli, "I acknowledge freely his great talents and acquirements, his accumulated knowledge, and the prodigious power with which he brings all those qualities into action. I acknowledge them the more freely, because it has been often our fortune to be opposed to each other—

‘Stetimus tela aspera contra,
Contulimusque manus: experto credite quantus
In clypeum assurgat, quo turbine torqueat hastam.’”

Save on the Catholic question, and hatred of Slavery, the two rivals were seldom agreed. But now, on this memorable December 12, Brougham was fairly carried away by the noble attitude which the Minister assumed, and breaks out into praise of his “sound, enlightened, liberal, and truly English principles—principles worthy of our best times, and of our most distinguished statesmen, which now govern the councils of this country in her Foreign Policy, and inspire the eloquence of the Right Honourable Secretary with a degree of fervour, energy, and effect, extraordinary and unprecedented in this House—unprecedented (I can give it no higher praise) even in the eloquence of the Right Honourable gentleman.”

VII

WE are near our appointed goal. Your patience, my younger friends, must no longer be tried. The voice which spoke so nobly for England at the close of 1826 was to be hushed for ever before another summer had passed. I need not dwell at length on the closing scene, so brilliant and so sad. I think if I were an Eton boy, it would be as sacred to me as even the closing scene of the mighty Chatham.

In March 1827, Lord Liverpool, who for fifteen years had held together an often discordant Cabinet, died. In April Mr. Canning was appointed Prime Minister, but all his chief colleagues declined to serve under the leading supporter of the Irish Catholics. He had to look elsewhere for allies. He found them, and he met Parliament serene and undismayed. But the spring of his life was broken. His countenance became haggard, his step feeble, his eye languid. To the father of the present Prime Minister he wrote on May 28: "My occupations for the twenty-four hours are, and have been for the last two months, more almost than either the compass of that time or my physical strength is adequate to." On July 6 the treaty was signed between England, France, and Russia,

to protect the Christians of Greece from the brutal oppression of the Turks. That was Canning's last public act, a final blow in the cause of freedom, a blow not unworthy of the great man, who, as an Eton boy all but forty years before, had contributed to the *Microcosm* some feeling lines on "The Slavery of Greece." On August 8 he died, in the same room at Chiswick which, just twenty-one years before, had witnessed the death of Mr. Fox. A week after, he was buried in Westminster Abbey, precisely at the foot—and, they tell us, within just nine inches—of the grave of Mr. Pitt, the one man, as he had once with proud humility declared, to whom "I was devoted with all my heart and with all my soul."

I have tried to recall to you, my young friends, some faint echoes of the voice of a great orator, an ardent patriot, and a high-spirited statesman. To the world he is all this; to *you*, Eton boys, he is this and something more. Of the long series of illustrious Etonians, "men renowned for their power, leaders of the people by their counsels, wise and eloquent in their instructions," on this stately bead-roll there has been hardly one—not even the Marquess Wellesley, whose monument is on your chapel wall—who carried through life, from the first dawn of a brilliant boyhood, a more constant and romantic affection for Eton.

When he left you for Oxford in 1788, he wrote on almost the last page of the *Microcosm* words which have, I daresay, been again and again quoted,

but which touch a stranger by the happy union of playful pedantry and simple affection: "From *her* to have sucked the milk of science, to have contracted for *her* a pious fondness and veneration which will bind me for ever to her interests, and perhaps to have improved by my earnest endeavours her younger part of the present generation, is to me a source of infinite pride and satisfaction."

So he wrote when he left you as a boy; and if his spirit could now address you, would it not invite you, with something of "a monarch's voice," so to carry on the great patriotic tradition of which you and your companions are the heirs, that all England may be your debtors—that each generation of English history, and each several class of our English commonwealth, may find its wants understood, its fancy charmed, and its admiration awakened and secured, by the sympathy, the grace, the courteous courage, and the unfailing public spirit, which were first drawn forth and then genially fostered in the playing-fields and in the Library of Eton?

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JOHN WESLEY

I

HOME AND CHILDHOOD

I SHALL speak to you with less misgiving if you will first allow me to say plainly what is not to be looked for in this Lecture. It is not a critical study of Wesley, still less a critical study of Methodism.

All that I shall try to do is to place before you certain scenes from the life of a great Christian. To those who have already made a study of him they will bring nothing new. But it may be that others who know little but his name will find even in so slight a sketch something which they may be not unwilling to remember.

First, then, when did Wesley live? He almost spanned the eighteenth century. He was born in 1703, and died in 1791. The year after his birth was the year of the battle of Blenheim. He lived long enough to see not only the Independence of the United States but also the meeting of the States-General at Versailles in May 1789, and the early throes of the French Revolution. It may be said, I believe, with literal truth, that among all "the

men of light and leading " then living in England, not one—unless it be Lord Chatham, who secured the North American Continent for the English race instead of for the French—not one has left so widespread or perhaps so deep an impression on mankind. While he lived, he was but little regarded by the mass of his countrymen. But his works have followed him. He has lain nearly a hundred and twenty years in his grave, but he still stirs the heart and moulds the faith of millions of Christians.

Let us first devote a very few words to his home. His father and mother had both been Nonconformists, and both became members of the Church of England. His father was rector of Epworth in Lincolnshire, a man of marked piety and of learning above the average. His mother was much more than this. She was one of those women who are born to nurture "Sons of Thunder." Indeed, one of her son's biographers has said, with pardonable exaggeration, "the true founder of Wesleyanism was Mrs. Wesley." During John's childhood, she took the most earnest pains with the training of his mind and heart. In his early manhood, her ripe and cultivated intellect enabled her to become his trusted counsellor. When he was but six years old, an incident occurred which left a permanent mark on his memory and his character. One night the parsonage house was set on fire by some incendiaries. The rest of the family escaped with the utmost difficulty, but in the hurry the little boy had been overlooked. At last he was heard crying

in the nursery "The father," we read in Southey, "ran to the stairs, but they were so nearly consumed that they could not bear his weight. Utterly in despair, he fell upon his knees in the hall, and in agony commended the soul of the child to God. The little boy ran to the door, and finding it impossible to escape that way, climbed upon a chest which stood near the window, and he was then seen from the yard. There was no time for procuring a ladder, but it was happily a low house. One man was hoisted on the shoulders of another, and could then reach the window, so as to take him out. A moment later, and it would have been too late. The whole roof fell in; and had it not fallen inward, they must all have been crushed together. When the child was carried to the house where his parents were, the father cried out, 'Come neighbours, let us kneel down: let us give thanks to God! He has given me all my eight children; let the house go; I am rich enough.'"

This providential deliverance Wesley remembered through life with the deepest gratitude. In reference to it he had a house in flames engraved as an emblem under one of his portraits, with these words for the motto, "Is not this a brand plucked out of the burning?"

II

OXFORD, EPWORTH, GEORGIA

AT the early age of seventeen Wesley left school at the Charterhouse, and entered Christ Church, Oxford.

That great College, which looks back to Wolsey as its founder, and has sent forth so many illustrious statesmen, scholars, and divines—a Wellesley, a Canning, a Peel, a Gladstone, a Salisbury, a Liddell, a Ruskin, a Pusey, and a Liddon—was destined also to shelter for a few years the eminent Churchman whose name is now linked for ever with one great branch of Nonconformity.

In their magnificent Hall, a visit to which may be called “a liberal education,” the portrait of John Wesley is one of its more recent and, I believe I may say, one of its much valued treasures.

In 1725, when he was twenty-two years of age, he was ordained. But before taking Orders he had grave scruples, partly of the intellect and partly of the conscience. He was not sure of his ground as to certain doctrines, and his conception of the office of a clergyman was so high that he could not easily persuade himself to accept the responsi-

bility. During this time of waiting, perhaps not the least fruitful of his life, he gave himself to devout studies.

It is always of interest to know what books have come closest to the heart of a remarkable man between the age of eighteen and twenty-five. In Wesley's case the books that spoke of God most clearly to his soul were the *Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis, the *Holy Living and Dying* of Jeremy Taylor, especially the chapter which treats of "Purity of Intention," and, not least, the two works of his high-minded contemporary, William Law, the *Christian Perfection* and the *Serious Call*.

"His life at Oxford," we read, "became very strict. He rose every morning at four, a practice which he continued till extreme old age. He made pilgrimages on foot to William Law in London to ask for spiritual advice. His fasts were so severe that they seriously impaired his health. He refused to return the visits of those who called on him, that he might avoid all idle conversation."

In 1726 he was elected Fellow of Lincoln College, an event which not only secured him a competence for life so long as he remained unmarried, but gave him, as it were, a new start in the university, and enabled him to choose just such friends, and no others, as seemed likely to help him forward in his religious longings. For about a year he studied very hard and very widely at his new College, and then left Oxford for a time to assist his father as a curate.

While he was absent, a new actor appeared on the scene. His younger brother Charles had come from Westminster School to Christ Church just after John obtained his fellowship. He is described as a sprightly, rollicking young fellow, with more genius than grace. John spoke to him about religion, but Charles answered, "What, would you have me to be a saint all at once?"

However, after his brother had left Oxford, his conscience was touched. He, too, began to lead a life of strictest self-discipline, and soon formed a small society of like-minded friends. "They lived by rule, and received the Sacrament weekly. They were called in derision the 'Sacramentarians,' 'Bible-bigots,' 'Bible-moths,' the 'Holy, or the Godly Club.' At last some one gave them half in jest the name destined to become, first so derided, and then so famous, the name of 'Methodists.'" The origin of the term is perhaps not wholly cleared up, but it was an old title, not new invented, but recalled from past times, and applied to this young body of Christians in reference to their systematic and, so to speak, methodical manner of life.

It is worth remarking that John Wesley was not, strictly speaking, the founder of this Society. When he returned to Oxford in November 1729, it was already there, and he was at once accepted as its leader. This incident seems typical of his whole career. Considered as a ruler, not as a saint, he does not so much think out and originate. Rather, he accepts and guides. So it was after-

wards at most of the critical periods of his life—his starting as a missionary to Georgia, his joining the Moravians in London, his unwilling acceptance of field-preaching, of meeting-houses, of lay-preaching, of the ordination of ministers by himself. At all these important crises we seem to see, not so much the thinker who speculates and forecasts, but the statesman lawgiver, who discerns what is practicable, and in a sense necessary, and then, following, as he believes, a more than human guidance, makes all things “according to the pattern which was shown to him in the mount.”

And now for a wide leap in his biography, passing over the years from 1729–1738, which, perhaps, more than any others, were the seed-time of his later harvests. How his father implored him to take his living at Epworth; how the son refused, urging that the question was not whether he could do more good at Epworth or at Oxford, but whether he could do more good to himself; how, after his father's death, he was persuaded by General Oglethorpe to go with Charles to Georgia in the hope of converting the Indians; how he met Moravians on board the outward-bound vessel, and was deeply impressed with their piety and their childlike faith during the raging of the storm; how his ministry in Georgia was confined wholly to the colonists and never even attempted to reach the Indians; how, after less than two years of unprofitable service, he shook off, as he

says, the dust of his feet, and left America for ever—all this can be read in any life of Wesley, and must be duly weighed by judges of his character, but it does not present any special incident on which I care now to detain you.

III

HIS "CONVERSION"

WESLEY returned to England early in 1738. He was depressed and dissatisfied with his spiritual state. "What have I learned," he asks, "while absent from my country? Why, what I the least of all suspected, that I who went to America to convert others, was never myself converted to God. . . . The faith I want is a sure trust and confidence in God, that through the merits of Christ my sins have been forgiven, and I reconciled to the favour of God." This faith he believed he had not yet attained, but it was soon to be granted him.

Four days after his arrival in London he fell in with three Moravian brethren, just arrived from Germany. One of these was Peter Boehler, the only man of his contemporaries, with the exception of William Law, who seems ever to have had much ascendancy over his powerful mind. Wesley conversed much with this newly-found friend, and the result was, in his own words, "I was clearly convinced of unbelief." Then arose in his mind the question, whether he ought not

to give up preaching. He consulted his guide, and received the remarkable answer: "Preach faith till you have it; and then, because you have it, you will preach faith."

Overborne rather than convinced by this appeal, he continued to preach as before. He also joined a small society of Moravians in London under the direction of Peter Bohler. He gladly accepted their strict rules; he believed their tenet of a faith instantaneously granted. But, for himself, he was still heavy at heart. As he said afterwards, "he had the faith of a servant, not of a son."

But the great change was near at hand. It came on Wednesday, May 24, 1738, the central date in Wesley's history. He was now thirty-five years of age. Fifty-three more years still lay before him, to be lived in the unclouded life of the faith which, if there be indeed notes of time in the spiritual world, was to date from that beginning.

"That evening," he says, "I went very unwillingly to a Society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans.

"About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death. Temptations returned, but herein I found the difference be-

tween this and my former state. I was striving, yea fighting, with all my might under the law, as well as under grace ; but then I was sometimes, if not often, conquered ; now I was always conqueror."

My Christian friends, we cannot speak of such a struggle as this without feeling surely that we stand on holy ground. We are not disposed to criticise or to analyse.

We would ask for that insight which comes from sympathy. Here is the soul of a man who from earliest childhood has walked in the fear of God, and humbled himself before his Father in heaven, and devoted himself to His service. Here is the soul of this man, already a "Master in Israel," declaring that it has only now at last found out God and learned the truth of truths as it is in Jesus. From this conviction he never swerved. On this faith he rebuilt a crumbling Church. By this faith he removed mountains of apparently hopeless impossibilities. By this faith he gave, under God, peace to thousands upon thousands in life and in death. If there was in it any element of illusion, there must have been much more of truth. No phrase of human language can define the process by which the soul of man lays hold of its God. The same phrase means one thing to one man, and another to another ; nor does our Father, even when He speaks most audibly, speak in precisely the same tones to all His children. Many years afterwards, Wesley himself printed and approved

these remarkable words from one of his correspondents: "Perhaps what the best heathens called reason, and Solomon wisdom, St. Paul grace in general, and St. John righteousness or love, Luther faith, and Fénelon virtue, may be only different expressions for one and the self-same blessing, the light of Christ shining in different degrees under different dispensations."

Whatever may be thought of the precise words in which Wesley strove to describe his inward change, of the fact and result of the change there can be no reasonable doubt. As has been said by a critical but by no means cynical lay historian, I mean Mr. Lecky, "it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that the scene which took place at that humble meeting in Aldersgate Street forms an epoch in English history."

IV

OPEN-AIR PREACHING

WITHIN a year from this time, in the year 1739, the real public life of Wesley began. In that year the following cardinal events occurred. George Whitefield returned from Georgia, and on February 17, preached for the first time in the open air near Bristol. Soon after, with great unwillingness, Wesley was persuaded to follow his example. Lastly, on May 12, the first stone was laid of the first Meeting-house.

We have now reached a stage in our story where we are met by two rival impossibilities. On the one hand, it is impossible to explain Wesley's position without an adequate sketch of the career and character of Whitefield. On the other hand, such a sketch is wholly out of the question at the present time. It would require a long lecture to itself, and, in truth, few lectures could be more instructive than a sketch of the life's work of the extraordinary man who may fairly be called, with all his glaring deficiencies of taste and culture, the greatest of all the pulpit orators that England has produced. All that we can now do is to state,

in the very briefest language, that George Whitefield, the son of an innkeeper at Gloucester, had been admitted by Charles Wesley in 1729 to the little brotherhood of Methodists at Oxford; that in 1736 he had been ordained, and excited keen spiritual interest by his preaching in churches at Bristol; that the ship which took him to Georgia in 1738 passed, in the Downs, within sight of the ship which brought Wesley back to England; and that now, in 1739, having returned from Georgia to collect money for an orphanage, he inaugurated for the first time the novelty of field-preaching because the clergy had become unwilling to admit him to their pulpits. His success at Bristol in stirring masses of poor and ignorant men, especially among the colliers of Kingswood, was extraordinary and unprecedented.

When at last obliged to leave Bristol, he could not bear that the good work should be interrupted, and he urged his friend John Wesley to take his place. After some hesitation, and with great reluctance, Wesley consented. The thought of preaching in the open air, soon to become one of the truisms of Methodism, and, indeed, of all vital Christianity, was at present a startling paradox.

“I could scarce reconcile myself,” says Wesley, “at first to this strange way, having been all my life, till very lately, so tenacious of every point relating to decency and order, that I should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin if it had not been done in a church.” Two days after, he

took the decisive step. "I spoke," he says, "from a little eminence in a ground adjoining the city," Bristol, "to about three thousand people. The Scripture on which I spoke was this, 'The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor.'"

There may be some here who remember how a kind of comment has been passed on this incident by one of the most powerful geniuses of our time. In the first volume of *Adam Bede* the second chapter is entitled "The Preaching." Dinah Morris is to speak to the Methodists in the open air, and to any one else who chooses to listen. And this is how she begins: "Dear friends, you have all of you been to church, and I think you must have heard the clergyman read these words: 'The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor.' Jesus Christ spoke these words. He said He came to preach the Gospel to the poor. I don't know whether you ever thought about those words much, but I will tell you when I remember first hearing them. It was on just such a sort of evening as this, when I was a little girl, and my aunt as brought me up took me to hear a good man preach out of doors, just as we are here. I remember his face well: he was a very old man, and had very long white hair; his voice was very soft and beautiful, not like any voice I had ever heard before. I was a little girl, and scarcely knew anything, and this old man seemed to me such a different sort of a

man from anybody I had ever seen before, that I thought he had perhaps come down from the sky to preach to us, and I said, 'Aunt, will he go back to the sky to-night, like the picture in the Bible?' That man of God was Mr. Wesley, who spent his life in doing what our blessed Lord did—preaching the Gospel to the poor—and he entered into his rest eight years ago. I came to know more about him years after, but I was a foolish, thoughtless child then, and I remember only one thing he told us in his sermon. He told us 'Gospel' meant 'good news.' The Gospel, you know, is what the Bible tells us about God."

I have quoted this passage from a work of acknowledged genius, because it places John Wesley so vividly before us, not indeed as he first preached from the great text on April 2, 1739, in the suburbs of Bristol—for he was then under thirty-six years of age—but as he appeared some fifty years later, and as our imagination still persists in portraying him. We see a calm, grave, venerable figure, dressed always with scrupulous neatness, his long, white hair falling loose over his shoulders. He would address and rivet audiences of eight thousand or even twenty thousand souls, but the spell lay not in impassioned gesture, or extraordinary flexibility of voice, but in the sanctity of his person, the intense reality of his appeal to the soul, the conviction that he spoke, not merely as a man, but as a consciously accredited ambassador of Him, Who had made for Himself, and longed to

recall to Himself, every soul of man or woman however far it had wandered from Him. "The style" of the preacher is described as "simple, terse, colloquial, abounding in homely images, characterised above all things by its extreme directness." For fifty years it never seems to have fallen on dull ears, save only in Scotland. There Wesley complained of the coldness and insensibility of the people, and a curious anecdote is told of Sir Walter Scott, who heard him preach when a boy, and observed that his style was too colloquial for the Scotch taste.

V

PHYSICAL EFFECTS OF HIS PREACHING

BUT it was not so in Bristol or among the rough colliers of Kingswood. There the effect of his preaching was at once pathetic and terrible. The reading of his Diary, day after day, during that month of April is a strange study. You seem to hear, almost to see, the hearts of a bygone age beating and quivering. There you note how the calm, earnest, pleading words did their work, not on the conscience only, or on the long dormant religious emotions, but even on the very bodies of his hearers.

A few instances of this may be quoted.

On April 17, as he preached on the fourth chapter of the Acts, "One that stood by, to our no small surprise, cried out aloud with the utmost vehemence, as in the agonies of death."

On the 21st, "A young man was suddenly seized with a violent trembling all over, and in a few minutes sunk down to the ground."

On the 26th, "While I was preaching at Newgate"—that is, in Bristol, not in London—"on these words, 'He that believeth hath everlasting life,'

I was insensibly led without any previous design to declare strongly and explicitly that God willeth 'all men to be thus saved'; and to pray that, if this were not the truth of God, He would not suffer the blind to go out of the way; but, if it were, He would bear witness to His word. Immediately one, and another, and another sunk to the earth. They dropped on every side as thunder-struck."

In all these cases, after paroxysms of varied duration, the soul of the sufferer came to itself, and there was a great calm and a great joy.

"In later years," so Southey tells us, "Wesley neither expected paroxysms of this kind, nor encouraged them. "It seems worth remarking that they happened far less at the preaching of Whitefield. The vehemence, the passion, the flowing tears, the pealing, ringing voice of that great orator, charmed, awed, moved, and overwhelmed; but, whatever the explanation, he rarely excited those shrieks and falls and frantic paroxysms which at one time were the constant accompaniments of what we called above the 'calm, terse, colloquial,' but soul-searching appeals of Wesley."

The year 1741 is one of the landmarks in this daring but seldom erratic course. It saw the origin of a fresh institution which might perhaps have been foreseen, the institution of Lay-Preachers. At first, Wesley and his brother Charles had been assisted by clergymen; but the general hostility of the clergy made it increasingly difficult to obtain

clerical help, while the growing numbers of their body called for more fellow-workers. Accordingly, after much hesitation, he resolved to approve and guide what he could not prevent. One of his lay followers, Thomas Maxfield, became a preacher without his knowledge. Wesley was prepared to denounce his conduct, but his venerable mother interfered. "John," she said, "take care what you do with respect to that young man, for he is as surely called of God to preach as you are."

Wesley listened to his mother, consented to hear Maxfield preach, and then gave his sanction in the words: "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good." With this two-edged sword of his Societies and his Lay-preachers, Wesley continued for fifty years to smite at the virtual heathenism of his countrymen. His amazing activity carried him again and again over England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. It is computed that in his long life of eighty-seven years he travelled a quarter of a million of miles, and preached more than forty thousand sermons. He rose always at four o'clock. He preached usually at five. When eighty-five, he once delivered more than eighty sermons in eight weeks. When more than seventy-five, he writes the astonishing words: "I do not remember to have felt lowness of spirits for a quarter of an hour since I was born." He had himself said, "The world is my parish!" Had there been railways and steamboats in his day, we may amuse our imagination by fancying what

corner of the vast European "parish" would have been unvisited by its incumbent, or what city of America or China or Japan or India would not have welcomed its ubiquitous apostle.

To show the value of this work, how it was needed, how it throve by opposition, how it drew the poor, how, as a rule, it repelled the rich, how it roused the Church of England, how it stimulated the languor of Dissent, would be to write a history of the religious state of England during two-thirds of the eighteenth century. When Wesley began his course, and, during by far the greater part of his long life, the prevalent conceptions of the Gospel of Jesus Christ—of its characteristic doctrines, of its practical obligations, of the type of character which it formed, of its bearing upon politics, upon literature, and upon education—were what we should now call deplorably low. True, nothing is more difficult than to compare the full moral state of a people in one generation with their full moral state in another. Whenever the comparison is attempted, some important factor, such as honesty, or kindness, or equity, or courage, is almost sure to be left out, not to be brought back to memory till long years after, when some great writer of so-called fiction recalls to us, by the sure light of imagination and sympathy, some good trait which had escaped the eye of a purely critical analysis. How much of good in the Puritan, the Covenanter, the stern hater and persecutor of the Covenanters, nay, even the rough cattle-lifter and

freebooter has been revealed to us by the genius of Scott! How much of genuine good in the farmers, the artisans, and even the despised clergy of the times of the great war with Napoleon has been restored to us by the less varied but far more profound genius of the illustrious George Eliot!

But, making all allowance for such sobering and balancing thoughts, we can scarcely be wrong in believing that if ever a time in our history called for a prophet from on high to stamp again on the minds of men and women the fading impress of the life and example and true mind of Christ, it was the time when Wesley began his unique and, at the outset, unintelligible career.

VI

SCENES AT EPWORTH AND WEDNESBURY

WE cannot at the close of a lecture trace the steps of that career. We would rather seize a passage from it here and there.

Let me take you with me to just two scenes. Let us for a moment follow him to Epworth, where he had been born, where his father had ministered for so many years and now lay buried in the churchyard.

His son came there unexpectedly on a Saturday evening in January 1743. The next day he offered to assist the curate in the service. The offer was declined, and the sermon was pointedly preached by the curate against enthusiasts.

After the service, as the people were coming out, notice was given that Mr. John Wesley, not being permitted to preach in the church, proposed to preach in the churchyard at six o'clock. At that hour of that winter evening he stood on his father's tombstone, and preached to the largest congregation Epworth had ever seen. For seven successive evenings the son preached from the same sacred pulpit to the peasants among whom for forty years his father had laboured with so little result.

“On one occasion,” we read, “the people on every side wept aloud ; on another several dropped down as dead ; Wesley’s voice was drowned by the cries of penitents ; and many, there and then, in the old churchyard, found peace with God, and broke out into loud thanksgiving.”

“I am well assured,” writes Wesley, referring to the days when he had been his father’s curate, “that I did far more good to my Lincolnshire parishioners by preaching three days on my father’s tomb than I did by preaching three years in his pulpit.”

And now let me hurry you abruptly to a very different scene a few months later. It is “the black country” in Staffordshire. A frightful mob of ruffians has for some days been harrying the Methodists at Wednesbury. Hearing of this, Wesley, like a true shepherd, hastens to the spot. He is dragged before two magistrates ; but it is late, seven o’clock in October, they are in bed, they say, or perhaps at dinner, and they positively refuse to see and hear him. As he is led away, a yet more savage mob from a neighbouring town rushes upon him. Some tried to seize him by the collar and pull him down. One big man struck at him from behind again and again with an oak club, but always just missed his head. Another struck him violently on the chest and another on the mouth with such force that the blood gushed out ; yet, says Wesley, “I felt no more pain from either of the blows than if they had touched me

with a straw." "Another," he adds, "came rushing through the press, and, raising his arm to strike, on a sudden let it drop and only stroked my head, saying, 'What soft hair he has!'"

The end of it was that the man who just before had headed the mob, touched by Wesley's perfect calmness and courage, turned and said to him, "Sir, I will spend my life for you : follow me, and not one soul here shall touch a hair of your head."

These were the early days of the Methodists, when every man's hand was against them—Magistrates, Clergy, Bishops, nay, even Dissenters.

It was not so for long. The time came when patience had her reward, and when the worth of the work wrought so persistently in Christ's name was too plain to be discredited. The time came when Wesley was almost afraid of the respect he received. "What!" he said, "then is the offence of the Cross ceased?"

When we remember the coarse attacks that were made upon him by two of the Bishops at an early stage of his ministry, it is pleasing to remember that others among them acted in a very different spirit. In 1777 Wesley met Bishop Lowth at dinner, when the learned Prelate refused to sit above him at table, saying, "Mr. Wesley, may I be found sitting at your feet in another world!" This story finds a touching parallel in some beautiful words of Whitefield, who, when asked by a heated partisan, violently alienated from Wesley on the tenets of Calvinism to which Whitefield himself

clung eagerly, whether he thought they would see John Wesley in heaven, replied in memorable language, well worth the attention of angry controversialists, "I fear not. *He* will be so near the throne, and *we* shall be at such a distance, that we shall hardly get a sight of him."

VII

THE CLOSE

A FEW words on the closing scenes of this strange career, and I have done.

On completing his eighty-second year, the old man says, "Is anything too hard for God? It is now eleven years since I have felt any such thing as weariness."

A year afterwards: "I am a wonder to myself! I am never tired, such is the goodness of God, either with writing, preaching, or travelling."

On his last birthday, June 28, 1790, this is his entry in his journal: "This day I enter into my eighty-eighth year. For above eighty-six years I found none of the infirmities of old age. But last autumn I found almost a sudden change. My eyes were so dim that no glasses would help me. My strength likewise now quite forsook me, and probably will not return in this world. But I feel no pain from head to foot; only it seems nature is exhausted, and, humanly speaking, will sink more and more till 'the weary springs of life stand still at last.'"

Two years before this he had lost his beloved

brother Charles, the "sweet Psalmist," not of Methodism only but of every Christian Church. As he lay dying, Wesley was away preaching in Shropshire. At the moment of his brother's departure the congregation were singing (so it was afterwards ascertained) that truly noble hymn by Charles :

" One army of the living God,
To His command we bow ;
Part of His host hath crossed the flood,
And part is crossing *now*."

A fortnight later Wesley was conducting a service in Bolton, and tried to give out his dead brother's magnificent hymn on Jacob's wrestling with God :

" Come, O Thou Traveller Unknown " ;

but when he came to the lines,

" My company before is gone,
And I am left alone with Thee,"

the bereaved old man burst into a flood of tears, sat down in the pulpit, and hid his face with his hands.

The brothers were not to be long divided. On February 24, 1791, Wesley wrote his last letter, a memorable letter, a letter which links together two generations by the bond of two bright but diverse Christian names, one star differing from another star in glory, the names of John Wesley and William Wilberforce. I must ask you to listen to some words of it.

“MY DEAR SIR,—Unless the Divine Power has raised you up to be an *Athanasius contra mundum*, I see not how you can go through your glorious enterprise in opposing that execrable villainy which is the scandal of religion, of England, and of human nature. . . . But if God be for you, who can be against you? Go on in the name of God and in the power of His might, till even American Slavery, the vilest that ever saw the sun, shall vanish away before it. That He Who has guided you from your youth up may continue to strengthen you in this and in all good things is the prayer of, dear Sir, your affectionate servant,

“JOHN WESLEY.”

It would have been hard indeed to flinch, even for a less stout heart than that of Wilberforce, after such a trumpet-call from such a Christian veteran. From the date of that letter to the final departure on March 2, there was a gradual sinking, full of devout prayer and praise. Wesley's last word on earth was “Farewell”; and then, we read, “just as one of his most faithful friends was saying, ‘Lift up your heads, O ye gates, be ye lift up ye everlasting doors, and this heir of glory shall come in,’ the old man gathered up his feet in the presence of his brethren, and without a groan and without a sigh was gone.”

The story is well known, but has not yet lost its pathos, how that at his funeral, held at five o'clock in the morning in order to prevent an overwhelming crowd of mourners, when the clergyman came to the words, “Forasmuch as it hath

pleased Almighty God of His great mercy to take unto Himself the soul of our dear brother here departed," instead of saying "brother," he said "*father*," and the vast multitude burst into tears.

Since that solemn funeral service a hundred and seventeen years have rolled away. Another great ecclesiastical revival has arisen, on other lines than Wesley's, and is still running its course.

"Another race hath been, and other palms are won."

But the work of Wesley still survives and still advances, chiefly among those whom he loved best, the poorer masses of his countrymen, the men and women who work hard, live simply, feel warmly, and crave for living contact with the unseen world and the Heavenly Friend. Even on earth such men and women are already "a great multitude whom no man can number." It is said that already they have far outnumbered every other Nonconformist body in England and every other religious body in the United States of America. But the eye which surveys the work of Wesley refuses to be bounded by the limits of earth. We are carried in thought backwards and forwards—backwards to the vast multitudes who owe it under God to "the spirit and power" of this man that they have lived lives unspotted from the world and then fallen asleep in Jesus; and forwards to the day when the secrets of all hearts are disclosed, when the fire shall have tried every man's earthly work of what sort it is, and the word of

promise is no longer a human hope but a "divine event": "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that have turned many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."

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WILLIAM WILBERFORCE

I

INTRODUCTION. ELECTED M.P. FOR THE COUNTY
OF YORK

JUST sixty-nine years ago, in the year 1833, "that great and good man," as Macaulay styled him, "William Wilberforce," lay in his coffin, awaiting burial in Westminster Abbey.

On Friday, July 26, the Abolition Bill was read for the second time in the House of Commons, and as the veteran champion of the cause received the news, he exclaimed, "Thank God that I should have lived to see a day in which England is willing to give twenty millions sterling for the Abolition of Slavery!"

The two next days, Saturday and Sunday, he was a dying man, and on Monday morning, July 29, he passed away, within a month of completing his seventy-fourth year.

Two days afterwards addresses were signed by almost every man of note in both Houses of Parliament, "earnestly requesting that he might be buried in the Abbey," "being satisfied," as they

said, "that public honours can never be more fitly bestowed than on such benefactors of mankind."

The funeral was on Saturday, August 5. Public business was suspended. The Speaker of the House of Commons, the Lord Chancellor Brougham, the Royal Duke of Gloucester, for so many years Chancellor of this University, with other men of the highest rank, took their places as pall-bearers beside the bier.

"Never," writes his eloquent kinsman, Sir James Stephen, "never had the solemn ritual of the Church been pronounced over the grave of any of her children with more affecting or more appropriate truth. Never were recited on a more fitting occasion the solemn words, 'I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, From henceforth blessed are the dead which die in the Lord. Even so, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours.'"

It is of this good man, at this time of the year, while, as it were, he lies silent before us at the close of his lifelong ministry, that I must try to give you something of a sketch—a sketch, not a picture, still less a criticism.

It must, of course, be most imperfect, but it shall at least be clear. The events selected shall not be too many or too crowded. Enough if, when we close, some of you are impelled to say, "Th man's life is worth studying. We will read, a mark, and enjoy for ourselves."

William Wilberforce was born at Hull on Augus

24, 1759, just three months after William Pitt. He began public life with all that seems to make it enviable, an ample fortune, a vivid intelligence, a sweet and joyous temper, a brilliant position in Parliament, the almost brotherly friendship of the young Prime Minister. At Cambridge they had known each other but slightly, Pitt being at Pembroke, Wilberforce at St. John's ; but they entered the House of Commons almost at the same time, just as each had completed his twenty-first year. The friendship then formed was never dissolved or seriously weakened by any difference of opinion, and is one of the most pleasing features in the life of each.

Let us follow the two young friends for a few minutes during the memorable weeks from December 1783 to March 1784. As Burke had said of an earlier crisis, nearly twenty years before, "it was a time for a man to act in."

The famous Coalition of Fox and North had come about early in the year, to the surprise and disgust of the whole country from the King downwards. The confederates had but a short shrift. On the 18th of December they were beaten in the House of Lords on their East India Bill, and the same night were contemptuously dismissed.¹ Then for three months, night after night, followed that amazing struggle—on the one side, nearly all the leading orators and experienced statesmen, furious for vengeance; on the other, the young Prime

¹ See p. 41 in the Lecture on Pitt.

Minister of twenty-five, who, with the haughty courage, and far more than the discretion, of his illustrious father, disdained to yield an inch to either taunt or threat.

We cannot here enter into the details of this memorable struggle. They form part of the life of Pitt rather than of that of Wilberforce. They are vividly described day after day in Wilberforce's *Journal*. Suffice it here to say that every engine of war was pitilessly brought to bear upon the young Minister by his exasperated opponents, and confronted by him with a cool intrepidity that still excites wonder. At length the last shot was fired. On March 9, 1784, Fox moved an address to the King, but carried it by only a single vote, a hundred and ninety-one to a hundred and ninety.

On the 25th, Parliament was dissolved. "No party," says Mr. Lecky, "ever went to the constituencies more hopelessly foredoomed to ruin than the Opposition which followed the banner of Fox and North. Some hundred and fifty of the Whigs lost their seats, and were consigned to the stake of history as "Fox's Martyrs."

Meanwhile, Wilberforce, eager to support his friend and leader, moved off to Yorkshire. He was sure of retaining his seat for his native Hull; but, as with Bonaparte on the Bridge of Lodi twelve years after, the "idea now shot across his mind that he might become a decisive actor on the political theatre. Then arose, for the first time, the spark of great ambition." How if he could wrest from

the Whig magnates the great county of York, and win it over to allegiance to the young Minister ?

He reached York on March 22. On the 25th there was a vast meeting in the Castle Yard. It lasted from ten o'clock till half-past four.

First an address to the King was moved condemning the Coalition. Then came the great Whig Lords, Carlisle, Fitzwilliam, John Cavendish, and the heir of the Duke of Norfolk. They never dreamed of a defeat. The afternoon was far advanced, and the listeners were growing weary. Suddenly a young man sprang upon the table. The weather was so bad, chilly with hail, that, as some one said, "it seemed as if his slight frame would be unable to make head against its violence." Previous speakers had been scarcely audible by that vast crowd. "Yet such was the magic of the Wilberforce voice that by his very first sentence he arrested attention, and for about an hour enchained his hearers." One of these was the famous biographer of Dr. Johnson, James Boswell, whose description of the scene has become historical.

"I saw," he said, "what seemed a mere shrimp mount upon the table ; but, as I listened, he grew and grew, until the shrimp became a whale."

The young orator flung himself of course on the detested Coalition, denouncing their East India Bill as "the offspring of that unnatural conjunction, marked with the features of both its parents, bearing token to the violence of the one and the corruption of the other."

The effect of this hustings speech was astonishing, and practically decided his own life's career.

"We'll have this man for our County Member," was shouted out by the freeholders while he was still speaking in the Castle Yard. A fortnight afterwards, when he had been returned at the head of the poll for Hull, came the nomination for the County, then undivided. He was formally proposed by Lord Mulgrave as "the bosom friend of the Prime Minister, second only to him in eloquence unexampled at their years."

A guarantee fund of £18,670 was formed, but a fourth part of it proved sufficient.

County elections were not then settled in a day. For four weeks the struggle continued, the candidates rushing about from town to town all over the county. At last, on April 6, the two Whig candidates retired, and Wilberforce and his friend Mr. Duncombe were triumphantly returned.

From that hour, through many hard-fought elections, he remained always at the head of the poll, till he retired of his own accord, nearly thirty years after, at the beginning of 1813.

"My dear Wilberforce, I can never enough congratulate you on such glorious success," was one of the many acclamations that poured in upon him. It came from Mr. Pitt, who had just been returned as Member for our University, and entered upon his proud course as for many years the most powerful Prime Minister that England has ever known.

II

THE SLAVE TRADE ¹

WITH this stirring party triumph the first Act in the public life of Wilberforce may be said to have closed. He returned to Westminster in May flushed with victory, and began again the old round of fashionable amusement. "Sitting up all night singing; shirked Duchess of Gordon at Almack's; danced till five in the morning"—so he jots it down in his truth-telling *Journal*. It is the same picture that was painted two years before in a curious letter of George Selwyn to Lord Carlisle: "When I left the House, I left in one room a party of young men who made me, from their life and spirits, wish for one night to be twenty. There was a table full of them—young Pitt, Lord Euston, Berkley (sic), North, etc. etc., singing and laughing à gorge déployée. Some of them sang very good catches; one Wilberforce, a Member of Parliament, sang the best."

¹ His struggle against the Slave Trade, as sketched in this chapter, is in the main copied from my sermon which was preached in Westminster Abbey, July 30, 1893, and published in 1899 by Messrs. Macmillan & Bowes.

“The Prince of Wales says he will go anywhere to hear you sing,” so he was told by one of his merry companions. In short, he had become the favourite, not to say the darling, of Society.

For a time it seemed that he was to be content with this, with this and nothing more. But it was not so to be. Little as he knew it, he was already “a chosen vessel,” and he was soon to learn how many things he must do and suffer for one beloved Name.

In the next year, 1785, when he was twenty-six years of age, the great change came. We may use the English word *change*, or we may use the Latin word *conversion*, but he was henceforward another man. He passed through the straight gate of profound self-condemnation and bitter sense of sinfulness into the clear light, never again to be overclouded, of God’s forgiving love. There are Christian lives in which the change has been far more startling, but I know of none where it has been at once more visible and more real. Never did a young man consecrate himself more solemnly to God’s service; and surely no man ever kept his vow, through a long life, with less of break or relapse.

“God Almighty has set before me two great objects, the Suppression of the Slave Trade and the Reformation of Manners.” So he wrote in his *Journal* in 1787, when he was but twenty-eight years of age. From early boyhood his heart had been touched by the miseries of slaves. When a schoolboy of fourteen he had written to his county

paper denouncing what his child's conscience called "the odious traffic in human flesh." Seven years afterwards, when he first entered Parliament, he had asked a friend on his way to the West Indies to collect information about the slaves, expressing his hope that some time or other "he should redress the wrongs of those wretched and degraded beings."

And now, in 1788, with his new vows of consecration fresh upon him, he resolved, after careful collection of facts, to make the first move in the House of Commons. But at this critical moment he was stricken down by grave illness. "All through life," we are told, "his labours were performed in spite of a delicate constitution."

It was his one earthly drawback. But in this spring of 1788 his health appeared entirely to fail. There was a seeming decay of all the vital functions. The best physicians agreed "that he had not stamina to last a fortnight." He was sent to Bath, after a promise from Mr. Pitt that he would himself take charge of the cause, and indeed the first motion on the subject was made by the Prime Minister in his friend's absence.

The sick man, however, by God's mercy recovered; and in the following year, in a speech of three hours and a half, dragged before the House the shameful secrets of the prison-house which had been so long ignored. It was one of those rare speeches which, alike by their matter and their form, arrest the conscience of mankind,

and create a new starting-point for human endeavour.

Mr. Burke spoke of it as "masterly and impressive." "The principles," he said, "were so well laid down, and supported with so much force and order, that it equalled anything he had heard in modern times, and was not, perhaps, to be surpassed in the remains of Grecian eloquence."

But it was not before blasts of eloquence, however loud and long, that the walls of this cruel Jericho were to crumble. Full eighteen years were yet to pass before the promised land was won.

I cannot, of course, take you through these years. We can but select a point here and there on the wide battlefield, through the long campaign, and watch how the leader bore himself at each.

Like all such leaders, he had to face murmurs from friends as well as menaces from foes. If at any moment he judged it wise to halt or postpone the attack, he was sure to be taunted with fickleness or weariness.

In 1790 we find him replying to one of these critics. "The principles," he says, "upon which I act, being those of religion, not of personal feeling, can know no remission and yield to no delay. I am confident of success, though I dare not say anything positive as to when it will come."

The following year, 1791, he received a letter of a very different kind. It has often been quoted. It links together, with a pathos which even a child can understand, two names whose praise is in all

the Churches, the name of Wilberforce and the name of Wesley. It is docketed as "Wesley's last words." It was written the day before the old man sank into the lethargy in which he lay till his death, five days after.

"MY DEAR SIR," it runs, "Unless the Divine Power has raised you up to be an Athanasius against the world, I see not how you can go through your glorious enterprise in opposing that execrable villainy which is the scandal of religion, of England, and of human nature. Unless God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils ; but if God be for you, who can be against you ? Oh, be not weary of well-doing. Go on in the name of God and in the power of His might, till even American Slavery, the vilest that ever saw the sun, shall vanish away before it. That He Who has guided you from your youth up may continue to strengthen you in this and in all good things is the prayer of, dear Sir, your affectionate servant,
JOHN WESLEY."

Such a clarion from such a death-bed may well have cheered the younger combatant when, three weeks later, he was again defeated in his annual appeal to Parliament.

The next year, 1792, the prospect was a little brighter. A resolution was passed providing for Abolition four years after ; but in 1793, the year of the guillotining of the King and Queen of France, the House "turned its back upon itself," and rescinded even this instalment of reform.

It was shortly before this that sympathy came

to him which must have been precious, not this time from a veteran saint like John Wesley, but from the tender-hearted and melancholy poet for whose works he had a singular affection.

The sonnet of William Cowper is a kind of phonograph of those gloomy hours of delay and calumny :

“ Thy country, Wilberforce, with just disdain
Hears thee by cruel men and impious call’d
Fanatic, for thy zeal to loose th’ enthrall’d
From exile, public sale, and slavery’s chain.
Friend of the poor, the wrong’d, the fetter-gall’d,
Fear not lest labour such as thine be vain.
Thou hast achiev’d a part; hast gain’d the ear
Of Britain’s Senate to thy glorious cause :
Hope smiles, joy springs, and tho’ cold caution pause
And weave delay, the better hour is near
That shall remunerate thy toils severe,
By peace for Afric, fenc’d with British laws.
Enjoy what thou hast won, esteem and love
From all the just on earth, and all the bless’d above.”

1795 was again a year of defeat, but 1796 began more brightly.

The second reading of the Slave Bill was carried by more than two to one. In Committee it passed even more decisively ; but on the third reading, only a few days later, it was thrown out by a majority of four. “ Ten or twelve of our friends absent in the country, or on pleasure. Enough at the Opera to have carried it.” “ His heart was sickened at this wretched luke-warmness.” Still he persevered. At last, in 1804, after seven more years

of toil and obloquy, the Bill passed the Commons by large majorities. In the Lords, after a full debate, it was "hung up" for a year. Then, in 1805, came once more a cruel check. The first reading in the Commons was so decisive that Wilberforce, in spite of so many warnings, had no longer any fears. To his astonishment and deep distress, he was again beaten on the second reading.

"I never felt so much," he wrote in his diary, "on any Parliamentary occasion. I could not sleep at night. The poor blacks rushed into my mind, and the guilt of our wicked land."

This was the sorest disappointment of all, but it was also the last.

In 1806 both the division and the tone of members were such as to assure success; and finally, in 1807, just twenty years after he had lain, as it was thought, a dying man at Bath, he carried the second reading of his Bill by two hundred and eighty-three to sixteen. It is one of the privileges of the House of Commons to inherit and to transmit illustrious traditions of noble manners and high-hearted feeling. Of these heirlooms it is the august trustee on the part of the nation, and I think I may say they are "precious in these days."

One of the most beautiful of such traditions, such almost sacred records, dates from the memorable night on which the twenty years' war against the traffic in human flesh was brought to its triumphant close. Among the speakers was Sir Samuel Romilly, always humane and chivalrous. At the

end of his speech he addressed himself to the younger members of the new Parliament. He urged them to let this day's event be a lesson how much the rewards of virtue exceeded those of ambition. He contrasted the feelings of the Emperor Napoleon, in all his greatness, encircled with kings of his own blood, with the feelings of that honourable member who would this night lay his head upon his pillow and remember that the Slave Trade was no more.

At these words, we are told, the whole House, surprised into a forgetfulness of its then ordinary habits, burst forth into shouts of applause "such as was scarcely ever before given to any man sitting in his place in either House of Parliament." As for the object of these acclamations, I again quote a faithful witness, who lived under his roof and knew him well :¹ "The friendly shouts of victory which arose on every side were scarcely observed or heeded in the delighted consciousness of having rendered to mankind a service of unequalled magnitude. He retired to prostrate himself before the Giver of all good things, in profound humility and thankfulness, wondering at the unmerited bounty of God, Who had carried him through twenty years of unremitting labour, and bestowed on him a name of imperishable glory."

¹ Sir James Stephen.

III

HIS PERSONALITY. MANNER IN SOCIETY. BOOK. ELOQUENCE

“WHAT was he like ? How did he look ? What sort of a man was he to talk to, to listen to, to live with ? ”

Shall we allow ourselves a pause of a few minutes to deal with these homely questions ?

There are three portraits of Wilberforce—one by Rising when he was twenty-nine ; one by Thomas Lawrence just forty years later ; and one by the young George Richmond when he was seventy-three, the year before his death. There is also the not very graceful statue in the Abbey.

From these portraits, and from all the recollections of those who loved him, there seem to shine out grace, refinement, humour, sensibility, benevolence, and this in spite of grave physical drawbacks. He was the reverse of a good-looking man. One affectionate but still candid friend speaks of “the insignificance of his slight and shapeless person.” Another, Lord Brougham, attributes to him “a figure exceedingly undignified and ungraceful, though the features of the face were singularly expressive.”

Ladies would not forgive me if I omitted to add that, till within a very few years of his death, he wore powder, and his dress and appearance were those of a thorough gentleman of the old school. On the whole, I picture him to myself as having a small, spare, and latterly almost misshapen frame, with the head slightly drooping on the chest; yet animated, lively, observant, sympathetic, always alert, always "on the spot," and, to borrow a phrase in vogue, I believe, among some nurses, "taking notice" of everything and everybody.

As to this quick, eager, almost restless attitude, all are agreed.

One of the best photographs of his manner in society is by Sir James Mackintosh, whom Wilberforce describes as "a paragon of a companion, quite unequalled."

Mackintosh writes in a letter to Mr. Babington, a common friend, "Do you remember Madame de Maintenon's exclamation, 'Oh, the misery of having to amuse an old King, Louis XIV., of course, *qui n'est pas amusable!*' Now, if I were called to describe Wilberforce in one word, I should say he was the most 'amusable' man I ever met with in my life. Instead of having to think what subjects will interest him, it is impossible to hit on one that does not. I never saw any one who touched life at so many points. . . . When he was in the House of Commons, he seemed to have the freshest mind of any man there. There was all the charm of youth about him. And he is quite as

remarkable in this bright evening of his days as when I saw him in his glory many years ago."

This was written in 1830. It was the same charm that had captivated Madame de Staël sixteen years earlier, when she said to Mackintosh, "Mr. Wilberforce is the best converser I have met with in this country. I have always heard that he was the most religious, but I now find that he is the wittiest man in England."

Add to this freshness and "amusableness" a rare vivacity and, so to speak, "mobility." "Who that knew him," says one dear friend, "can fail to recall the rapid movements of his somewhat diminutive form, the illumination of his expressive countenance, and the nimble finger with which he used to seize on every little object which happened to adorn his path?"

Another dear friend, Mr. John Harford, in his very delightful *Recollections*, gives us a kind of snapshot of this almost abnormal liveliness and rapidity. Harford met him in 1812 at a country house, one of the guests being Mr. West, the aged President of the Royal Academy. West was naturally full of anecdote on painters and sculptors. "It amused me not a little," says Harford, "to witness my friend's impatience of being chained down too long to any one topic. He was himself all point and brevity in relating an anecdote, and as the venerable President was once or twice tediously minute in his descriptions, he fidgeted about on his chair, then got down on one knee,

looking earnestly at him, then rose, with some exclamation of surprise at what he was listening to, and again quickly changed his position, though it was obvious that he was on the whole much interested in the conversation."

What a picture of our grave and almost canonised philanthropist ! If we close our eyes for a moment, do we not almost hear the rustling of the wings of fairyland ? Is it not the fidgeting of the dainty, delicate Ariel, a little bored by the latter half of an hour's lecture from the Academic Prospero, and almost fretfully demanding "My liberty," as it is long "past the mid-season" ?

But it is time to turn from the lighter side of this most versatile of men to those gifts which made him so impressive and so influential as a lay representative of the Christian faith. If ever a man "walked with God" on earth, and spent a persistent life, consecrated to the noblest of aims, "as ever in" his "great Task-Master's eye," it was he. Truly, as Sir James Stephen puts it, "God was in all his thoughts."

I will call but two witnesses. First, there is his *Journal*, spread over some forty years, and clearly never meant by him to be seen by any eye but his own.

Secondly, there is the one book which bears his name. It was begun in the terrible year 1793, the year of the execution of Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette, and was published in 1797, the year of the death of Burke. It was almost the very last book that this great man read as he lay dying at

Beaconsfield. He derived much comfort from it, and said that, if he lived, he should thank Wilberforce for having sent such a book into the world. It was an octavo of nearly five hundred pages, and was entitled *A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians in the Higher and Middle Classes in this Country, contrasted with Real Christianity*, by William Wilberforce, Esq., M.P. for the county of York.

To send forth such a work was truly a "venture of faith." Both his shrewd publisher and his staunch friend, Isaac Milner, President of our Queens' College, where he was so often a guest, had shaken their heads ominously over the prospect of its success. Five hundred copies might perhaps be risked, if he gave his name. But the spirit of prophecy does not always rest on sagacious publishers or even Heads of Colleges. Within a few days the book was out of print. Within half a year five editions, seven thousand five hundred copies, had been sold. In 1826, twenty-nine years after, fifteen editions had issued from the press in England. In America twenty-five editions were sold in the same period. Further, it was translated into five European languages—French, Italian, Spanish, Dutch, and German.

You will not expect me to criticise a book which at the time had such a run and set so many men of the world thinking and wondering. Devotional works, unless they are enshrined in sweet or noble poetry, like that of Herbert and Keble, or spring

from acknowledged genius, as that of an Augustine, an à Kempis, or a Bunyan, seldom, I suppose, outlive the era of their birth. The *Practical View* is hardly an exception. We may say of it, reverently, it "served its generation by the counsel of God." It spoke to our grandfathers and our grandmothers as a voice from "the Presence." It hit its mark. "Not a year," we are told, "passed during his lifetime—a period, that is, of thirty-six years—in which he did not receive fresh testimonies to the blessed effects which it pleased God to produce through its publication." It came weighted with the social charm, the devoted life, the unstained integrity, and the high station of its lay author. What might have passed with little notice from the pen of a country parson, a leisured Canon, or even a Dean, came like a bolt in the blue from the "Nightingale," as he was called, of the House of Commons, the bosom friend of the powerful Prime Minister, and the unassailable member for the County of York. In our day the chief value of this very earnest work is perhaps historical. For those who wish to know what Christian ideals moulded the thoughts and lives of our countrymen and countrywomen during the first decade of the French Revolution, the following authors must be brought to the bar as witnesses—John Wesley, William Cowper, John Newton, Richard Cecil, Hannah More, Legh Richmond, and William Wilberforce.

But now let us pass, however abruptly, from the writer to the speaker. Rob Roy was an effective

and picturesque figure even in the streets of Glasgow, but it was only "with his foot on his native heath" that he flashed forth as "the Macgregor." And the "native heath" of the Member for Yorkshire was not the study or the writing-table, but the platform, the hustings, and the House of Commons. In that age of great orators there can be no doubt that he held a very high place.

Mr. Lecky, it is true, in a not unfriendly sketch, says that "he could not be compared in intellectual power with Pitt, Fox, Burke, or Sheridan, but he stood high in the second line of parliamentary debaters."

This judgment, though I believe strictly true, especially in its first half, seems to me, on the whole, misleading. It suggests a lower estimate of Wilberforce's powers than seems to have been formed by those who heard him.

We have already quoted Burke's splendid eulogy on his first great speech against the Slave Trade in 1789.

Pitt is known to have said repeatedly—this we have on the authority of the first Lord Harrowby—"Of all the men I ever knew, Wilberforce has the greatest natural eloquence." Sir Samuel Romilly called him "the most efficient speaker in the House of Commons"; and Canning said in 1817, "If there is any one who understands thoroughly the tactics of debate, and knows exactly what will carry the House along with him, it is my honourable friend."

Perhaps the fullest account of his oratorical powers

is given by Mr. Morritt, the owner of Rokeby, to whom Sir Walter Scott's famous poem is inscribed. "Wilberforce," he says, "held a high and conspicuous place in oratory, even at a time when English eloquence rivalled whatever we read of in Athens or in Rome. His voice itself was beautiful—deep, clear, articulate, flexible. He often rose unprepared in mixed debate, on the impulse of the moment, and seldom sat down without having struck into that higher tone of general reasoning and vivid illustration which left on his hearers the impression of power beyond what the occasion had called forth. I always felt, and have often heard it remarked by others, that in all his speeches, long or short, there was generally at least from five to ten minutes of brilliance, which even the best orator in the House might have envied."

For example: "Few passages," says Lord Brougham, "can be cited in the oratory of modern times of a more electrical effect than the singularly felicitous allusion to Mr. Pitt's resisting the torrent of Jacobin principles: 'He stood between the living and the dead, and the plague was stayed.'"

Or take another instance of a very different kind, which at the time astonished and delighted his hearers. In 1817 Sir Francis Burdett had made the tactless blunder of addressing him, amid cries of order from all sides of the House, as "the Hon. and religious member."

For almost the first and probably the very last time in his long life, this most gentle of combatants

tasted, or rather allowed himself to sip for a brief moment, the perilous sweets of revenge. Turning round upon his burly opponent who sat high above him, the slight and seemingly feeble figure drew his rusty sword from its sheath, and ran him fairly through the body—I mean of course in the way of metaphor.

A common friend having remarked to Sir Samuel Romilly, beside whom he sat, that this greatly outmatched Pitt himself, the great master of sarcasm, Romilly replied, “Yes, it is the most striking thing I almost ever heard ; but I look upon it as a more singular proof of Wilberforce’s virtue than of his genius ; for who but he was ever possessed of such a formidable weapon, and never used it ? ”

IV

HIS ATTITUDE TO LORD CASTLEREAGH IN 1814 AND 1815

WE left Mr. Wilberforce, I am almost afraid to think how long ago, standing in his triumphal car as the applauded conqueror of the Slave Trade. This was early in 1807, and he lived, as we have seen, till 1833, and was a Member of Parliament till 1829.

How then, it may be asked, did he employ himself during these twenty-six years? He was not a general to be content with only one campaign. When his first great victory was secured, he was in no humour to unarm and disband.

"Well, Henry," he had said playfully to Mr. Thornton on the very night of the success, "what shall we abolish next?"

"The lottery, I think," was the less than playful answer.

To what, then, did the experienced reformer direct his new efforts?

First, it will be understood that much vigilance was needed to keep the ground so hardly won. Then, though within the British dominions the

Slave Trade had fallen, Slavery itself still held up its head. Then there came the great era of 1814, when Bonaparte was struck down, and the Bourbon King restored. Peace was at length signed, to the joy of all free men. But how would it affect the poor slaves?

Our conquests in the naval war had been so complete that scarcely an island colony was left to France or Spain. But now some of these colonies were to be given back. What would be the fate of the slaves when handed over to their old masters?

Some anxious weeks passed. It was early in April that Bonaparte was sent to Elba.

On June 6, Lord Castlereagh returned from Vienna to the House of Commons, bearing under his arm the Treaty of Peace with France. He was received, as was natural, with a torrent of cheers. It was a proud moment in our history. "England has saved herself by her exertions, and will save Europe by her example." Such had been Pitt's majestic prophecy a few hours after the arrival of the news of Trafalgar, and now in nine years the prophecy was fulfilled. The tyranny of twenty years was at length overpast, and England had borne no second part in pulling down the world's oppressor. No wonder that the English Minister at such a moment was welcomed with "tumult of acclaim." But, strange to say, amid all this concert of rejoicing, there was one voice eloquent by its silence, and that was the voice of Wilberforce.

He waited till the cheers had died down. He

waited till the Minister had moved that the treaty do now lie upon the table, and then, to quote the words of his *Diary*, he "opened upon him." "If," he said, "I have not been able to concur in the salutations with which my noble friend has been welcomed, it is not, I can assure him, from any want of personal cordiality, but because, on seeing him coming up to the House with the French treaty in his hands, I beheld the death-warrant of a multitude of innocent victims whom I had fondly indulged the hope of having rescued from destruction. My noble friend must allow for the acuteness of the feelings under which I speak, on reflecting that when at length, after a laborious contention of so many years, I had seemed to myself in some degree in possession of the great object of my life, when the cup was at my very lips, it is now rudely dashed from them for a term of years, if not for ever."

The truth was that Castlereagh had failed to induce the French to pledge themselves to more than this, that they would abolish in five years, and even this pledge was regarded as but a vague promise, which it was by no means certain that the stipulators would redeem. It seems difficult to acquit Castlereagh of some faint-heartedness in this part of his charge. Such, at least, was the belief of one good judge, the Russian Emperor. Six days after the scene just described in the House of Commons, Alexander invited Wilberforce to call upon him in London.

“He took me by the hand very cordially,” says the *Diary*, “and assured me that he was much interested in my object. On my stating my fear that the French would not abolish at the time settled, he replied heartily, ‘We must make them.’ And then, correcting himself, ‘We must keep them to it.’ When I was expressing my concern about the treaty, he said, ‘What could be done when your own ambassador gave way?’”

We seem, my friends, to have travelled somewhat far since a Russian Czar could use such language to a private member of an English Parliament respecting their common ally, the French! Do you ask, then, how the difficulty was got over? The unexpected plays a vast part in the affairs of nations.

First, the summer and autumn of 1814 were spent in what we should now call “agitating the country.” More than eight hundred petitions, with nearly a million signatures, soon covered the table of the House of Commons, and Lord Castlereagh was warned that in the coming Congress of Vienna the Minister of England could not afford to sacrifice the cause of the slaves. Wellington, too, now became our ambassador at Paris, and exerted himself manfully, though, as he wrote to Wilberforce in December, “We have nobody for us on this question but the King.”

Would the King, poor Louis XVIII., have overcome the prejudices of his selfish nobles, of his interested merchants, of his inscrutable Talleyrand? To

that very doubtful question history soon gave a startling reply.

“From his rock of Elba,” I quote again from the son and the biographer, “from his rock of Elba Bonaparte had been an observant witness of the feelings of this country. Upon his sudden return to power, he sought to ingratiate himself with England by proclaiming a total and immediate abolition of the Slave Trade. Thus was the bloody cup dashed from the hands of France, and the scourge of Europe became the pacificator of Africa. And when Louis was again restored, after Waterloo, by British arms, he was not suffered to revive the hateful traffic.”

“I have the gratification of acquainting you,” writes Lord Castlereagh to Wilberforce from Vienna on July 31, six weeks after Waterloo, “that the long-desired object is accomplished, and that the present messenger carries to Lord Liverpool,” the Prime Minister, “the unqualified and total Abolition of the Slave Trade throughout the dominions of France.” Truly, the last days of July and the earliest days of August may be almost called the Wilberforce season !

V

CONCLUSION

AND now, my kind and patient friends, prepare for your own speedy emancipation. I must omit much that I should have liked to have touched. It was not only in the Abolition first of the Slave Trade and then of Slavery itself that Wilberforce bore a leading part. He was foremost during forty years in almost every effort for the moral and religious elevation of the country. It was he who, in 1793, and again in 1813, insisted on the need of Missionary effort in India. It was he who was the life and soul of almost all the religious Societies that between 1790 and 1830 were instituted by devout and earnest men—the Church Missionary Society, the Tract Society, the British and Foreign Bible Society. These bodies, when they celebrate their Jubilee, or their Centenaries, all speak with grateful veneration of William Wilberforce, almost as a Greek colony of old might have spoken of its deified Founder, or as the Orders of the Preaching Friars might have spoken of Dominic and Francis. I should have liked also to have said a word on some of his most renowned contemporaries, with

his pithy comments on their characters, their merits, their objects, their eloquence: Fox, for example, whose politics he disapproved, whom he loved for his warm-hearted championship of the slaves; Windham, whom he pronounced as in conversation *facile princeps*, "the most agreeable scholar-like gentleman, or gentleman-like scholar, I ever remember to have seen"; Sheridan, whom he thought overrated as a wit by his biographer, Tom Moore: "Our general impression was that he came to the House with his flashes prepared and ready to let off;" Canning, again, of whom he spoke in different tones at different times—at one moment somewhat disparagingly: "Canning was not a first-rate speaker. Oh, he was as different as possible from Pitt, and from old Fox too, though he was so rough. Canning had not the art, *celare artem*. If effect is the criterion of good speaking, Canning was nothing to them. He never drew you to him in spite of yourself. You never lost sight of Canning, even in that admirable speech of his about Sir John Hippisley, when your muscles were so exercised by laughing."

But then, again, an earlier verdict, not inconsistent but more favourable: "Pitt and Fox carried their auditors along with them with a power that appeared at the time irresistible; but so varied are Canning's qualifications—such his eloquence, wit, and humour, and so striking his figure and manner, that I really must account him as on the whole as perfect an orator as I have ever known."

But above all, I could have wished to say a little of his earliest and lifelong friend, Mr. Pitt, of whom in 1821 he drew up what would now be called an elaborate "appreciation," and of whom he said emphatically on more than one occasion, "On the whole the intellectual powers of Pitt were superior to those of any man I have known. I certainly never knew so extraordinary a man. There was in him a moral elevation and greatness of soul which raised him far above the level of most of his adherents. I never saw a man more entirely free from vanity." And again, just when he first thought it right to oppose him, "I am convinced if the flame of pure disinterested patriotism burns in any human bosom, it burns in his. Believe me, who am pretty well acquainted with our public men, that he has not his equal for integrity as well as ability in the *primores* of either House of Parliament." The saddest hours in Wilberforce's happy life were when, as in 1793, at the breaking out of the war with France, he felt constrained to oppose his illustrious leader. Nor was the sorrow only on one side. Pitt was not only distressed but even agitated. "Twice only was the sleep of the great Minister broken by the events of his public life; once by the Mutiny at the Nore, and once by the first public opposition of the trusted and beloved friend of his youth."

But we must end. Let us leave our hero—for he was a true hero—where we began, in his last and befitting home, the home in which they laid

him on Saturday, August 5, almost exactly sixty-nine years ago.

I hope that many here know and admire as I do the close of Macaulay's Essay on the great Earl of Chatham. If it is rhetoric, it is the rhetoric of the heart, and of a noble heart. "Chatham," he says, "sleeps near the northern door of the church, in a spot which has ever since been appropriated to statesmen, as the other end of the same transept has long been to poets. Mansfield rests there, and the second Pitt, and Fox, and Grattan, and Canning, and Wilberforce. In no other cemetery do so many great citizens lie within so narrow a space."

No poet, or minstrel, of his own time or later, has rendered to Wilberforce the tribute which was paid to Pitt and Fox with such dignity and pathos by the chivalrous chronicler of *Marmion* and of *Flodden Field* :

"Drop upon Fox's grave the tear,
'Twill trickle to his rival's bier :
O'er Pitt's the mournful requiem sound,
And Fox's shall the notes rebound."

But as we look down for the last time into that narrow vault, so rich in vanished worth ; as we thank God for this faithful servant who wrestled so closely and so bravely with the giant sin of his age, and cleared for ever his country's name ; as we think of his stainless life, his gracious and winning courtesies, his long and loving labours for mankind ; and, yet once more, as we mark, during all his busy journeyings through the dust and heat of the

world, his constant heavenward gaze, as of one who, amid all the happiness and the energies of earth, yet "desired a better country," we may be permitted to recall that lofty elegy of well-nigh a hundred and eighty years ago, in which Tickell enshrines his love and reverence for the genius and the virtue of Addison :

"Oft let me range the gloomy aisles alone,
 Sad luxury ! to vulgar minds unknown,
 Along the walls where speaking marbles show
 What worthies form the hallowed mould below ;
 Proud names, who once the reins of empire held,
 In arms 'who triumphed, or in arts excelled ;
 Chiefs, graced with scars, and prodigal of blood ;
 Stern patriots, who for sacred freedom stood ;
 Just men, by whom impartial laws were given ;
 And saints, who taught, and led, the way to heaven.
 Ne'er to these chambers, where the mighty rest,
 Since their foundation, came a nobler guest ;
 Nor e'er was to the bowers of bliss conveyed
 A fairer spirit or more welcome shade."

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LORD SHAFTESBURY

LORD SHAFTESBURY AS A SOCIAL REFORMER

It is as the friend and champion of the poor that we shall this evening hold converse with the late Earl of Shaftesbury. He was much more than this. He left his mark on many pages of English history, political and ecclesiastical, but with this we are not now concerned. For the sake of his poor clients he refused office, and stood aloof from party. Neither of the two great parties could claim him. Shortly after his death the eloquent Duke of Argyll, a Liberal statesman, declared in the House of Lords, amid general approval, "My Lords, the social reforms of the last century have not been mainly due to the Liberal party. They have been due mainly to the influence, character, and perseverance of one man, Lord Shaftesbury."

And Lord Beaconsfield, the great Tory leader, had said eight years earlier: "All the honour and the glory belong to one. The name of Lord Shaftesbury will descend to posterity as one who has, in his generation, worked more than any other individual to elevate the condition and to raise the character of his countrymen."

The object of this address is to bring before you that particular "aspect of Christian work during the nineteenth century" which is identified with the name of this distinguished man. Not, of course, that he stood alone in the battle any more than Wilberforce stood alone in the battle with the Slave Trade, or Cobden stood alone in the battle with the Corn Laws. It is one of the blessings of great reforms undertaken in the cause of humanity that they create what Nelson called "a band of brothers." Good men find, and help to make, other good men. And thus the sum of human worth is advanced.

It would require a knowledge far beyond mine to give even a sketch of the state of our poorer classes at the close of the long war with Napoleon. One thing is certain, that in every known field of labour—the mine, the colliery, the chimney, the shop, the factory, the cornfield—cruelties were practised, wrongs were suffered, outrages were systematically inflicted which fill the mind of any modern reader not with shame only, but with wonder. A real student of the subject would, of course, dive into histories and reports and blue-books and every accessible source of economic statistics. Most of us, I imagine, gather such knowledge as we possess from a different source—from a few poems, like Hood's "Song of the Shirt," and Mrs. Browning's "Cry of the Children," or "The good time coming, boys," or some of the Corn Law Rhymes; or, again,—shall we admit it?

—from four novels, each a work of genius, *Oliver Twist*, by Charles Dickens, *Mary Barton*, by Mrs. Gaskell, *Shirley*, by Charlotte Brontë, and *Sybil*, or *The Two Nations*, that is, the nation of the Rich and the nation of the Poor, by Disraeli.

It was to this state of things, this national dislocation and almost disruption, that young Lord Ashley, at an early age, brought his name, his rank, his mind, and his heart.

What was the origin of a career so special, so almost unique? Accounts will, of course, differ. One partial account I can myself contribute.

It so happened that some twenty years ago Lord Shaftesbury and his son Evelyn were lunching with me at Harrow. More than thirty years before, another much loved son, Francis, had died at the School, and in the afternoon we went to the brow of the hill to visit his grave. As we came back, and passed the school gates, the old man—he was nearly eighty—suddenly stopped, as if he saw something in the road, and, pointing to it, said to his son: “It was just there that, more than sixty years ago, I saw two drunken fellows carrying a pauper from the workhouse to the grave. The pall hung loose over the coffin. They were singing some ribald song. I remember my feeling of horror and disgust. I believe it was largely that sight which led me, under God, to devote my life to the service of the poor.” And then he added, in deepening tones, “There is nothing, Evelyn, which the poor feel so keenly as dishonour to their dead.”

Can we map out with any degree of clearness the several provinces of this devoted life ? In the course of his eighty-four years, from 1801 to 1885, and specially in the forty years between 1828 and 1868, he threw himself into a large and motley assortment of humane movements. He pleaded the cause of Lunatics, of overworked labourers in Mines, in Factories, in agriculture ; of children suffering under various forms of degradation, homeless, ignorant, destitute, forced to climb Chimneys. He explored, disclosed, and relieved the cruelties inflicted on young girls and women in more than one branch of trade. He made a special study of the criminal classes, the foul dwellings of the poor, the habitually violated laws of health.

I

LUNATIC ASYLUMS

HE began his public life just as Dr. Arnold was entering on his illustrious career at Rugby, and, I may add, soon after Keble had published the *Christian Year*.

In 1827 Mr. Robert Gordon had brought before the House of Commons the monstrous abuses then rife in Lunatic Asylums. The following year he returned to the charge, and young Lord Ashley, not quite twenty-seven years of age, seconded his motion with a maiden speech, speaking in so low a tone that he was nearly inaudible in the gallery.

This slight effort, though warmly praised by one of its hearers, the great Sir Robert Peel, is naturally not included in Lord Shaftesbury's published speeches; but there are two others, delivered in 1844 and 1845 on the same sacred and pathetic subject. Improvement in the treatment of Lunatics is indeed one "aspect of Christian work" during this century. Seventy years ago the treatment of these poor creatures was appalling. "Chains and whips, and darkness, and solitude, were the approved and only remedies."

They were confined in public asylums, in private asylums, and in private houses ; and their condition would seem, as a rule, to have been best in the first and worst in the last, for in private houses no inspection was allowed.

A Commission in Lunacy was now appointed, of which Lord Ashley was the unpaid Chairman. Searching inquiries were made all over Great Britain. His two speeches in July 1844 and June 1845, delivered at a time when his mind was sorely distracted by anxieties as to the fate of his Ten Hours Factory Bill and his breach with his old friend and chief, Sir Robert Peel, are a memorable instance of intellectual tenacity and moral fervour.

It was towards the close of the latter speech that he thrilled the House with his story of Pinel and Couthon, strangely assorted pair, going together, during the Reign of Terror, into the " great Bedlam " of Paris, and there deliberately unchaining a maniac, an English officer, who had been bound in his dungeon for forty years and had killed one of his keepers with a blow from his manacles. He ended this speech with the surely fine dilemma, worthy of a Christian senate : " Be assured that it is not in the order of Providence that such labour should be altogether without fruits. For one of two results you cannot fail of attaining. Either you will behold the blessings of happiness and health revisiting the homes of the emancipated sufferers, or you will enjoy the satisfaction of having laboured

with disinterestedness and zeal for those who cannot make you the least compensation."

It was this style of speech which a year before had drawn from Mr. Sheil his famous sentence, well-nigh the happiest of all parliamentary eulogies : " It is a saying that it does one's eyes good to see some people, and I may observe that it does one's heart good to hear others. One of those is the noble Lord. There is something of a *Sursum Corda*, ' Lift up your hearts,' in all that he says. . . . "

It may be truly said that he has added nobility even to the name of Ashley, and that he has made " humanity " one of " Shaftesbury's Characteristics." This graceful allusion to the " Characteristics," the work of his ancestor, the third Earl, in 1713, was received with much cheering from all sides.

II

CHIMNEY SWEEPS

LET us pass to another form of oppression even more appealing to the heart of humanity. If you take up Sydney Smith's works, and look at the table of contents, you will see a ghastly list of the plagues under which the human race were writhing seventy years ago. I give them in his order, just seven of them: *Chimney Sweepers, Spring Guns, Man Traps, Prisons, Persecuting Bishops, Botany Bay, Game Laws.*

It is the first of these, and perhaps the ghastliest, worse even than the persecuting Prelates, which I would for a moment recall to your memories, I mean the poor little Chimney Sweepers, or "climbing boys," as they were called. They were often as young as five or six. Little girls even were sometimes employed.

As far back as 1819 Sydney Smith contributed to the *Edinburgh Review* an article on this subject. It was based on a report of a committee of the House of Lords.

One boy says, when questioned, "Did you ever know a boy get burnt up a chimney?" "Yes,

I have been burnt myself, and have got the scars on my legs. I have been up more than forty chimneys where I have been burnt." Again, "Have you known boys stick in chimneys?" "Yes, frequently." "Ever necessary to break open a chimney to take the boy out?" "Oh yes." "Frequently?" "Monthly, I might say."

Further, one may note the hideous fact that these little Sweeps were subject to a well-known form of cancer, which often led to premature death.

Well, this abomination, though held up to public abhorrence by Sydney Smith in 1819, was still vigorous in 1840, in 1851, in 1854, in 1861, in 1863, when various attempts to deal with it were made and baffled.

At last, in 1864, only thirty-six years ago, Lord Shaftesbury passed the "Chimney Sweepers Regulation Act," by which any man sending a boy up a chimney was made liable not to a fine, but to imprisonment with hard labour. Even so the evil spirit died hard. In 1866 the Act was pronounced a failure. In 1872 a little boy was suffocated in a flue in Staffordshire. Lord Shaftesbury wrote a letter to the *Times*, and brought the matter before the House of Lords, but with no result.

At last Cambridge—our own Cambridge, of which we are all so proud—achieved what Staffordshire had failed in. A poor boy of fourteen, George Brewster, was suffocated in a flue near Cambridge. The man who employed him was convicted of

manslaughter, and sentenced to six months' hard labour. The *Times* took the matter up, on the ground that the punishment was not enough for such a crime.

This gave Lord Shaftesbury his opportunity. "On June 4," he writes in his *Journal*, "by God's blessing, Chimney Sweepers Bill passed through committee of House of Lords in the twinkling of an eye—not a syllable uttered."

A few weeks later it passed the House of Commons under the conduct of the Home Secretary, a pupil of Dr. Arnold at Rugby, the still living Viscount Cross.

Ah, my friends, when we read of such horrors, when we realise how recent they are, how nigh to us even at our doors, what a flood of light is thrown on those grand old words, "The wisdom of our ancestors"!

Is it possible that there may even now be prevailing in our shops, in our streets, in our theatres, horrors to which we are ourselves as blind as our good fathers and grandfathers were blind, in the more or less distant past, to the tortures of the Lunatic and the Sweep?

III

DWELLINGS OF THE POOR

LONG before this tardy victory was won there were two other pieces of pre-eminently "Christian work" of which Lord Shaftesbury was the life and soul.

"Houses of the Poor" may stand for the one, "Ragged Schools" for the other.

Of all the obstacles that beset a social reformer, the housing of the poor is perhaps the most staggering. It confronts him everywhere. It blocks the way of all other reforms. What can you do for education, or temperance, or purity, or health, or self-respect as long as a home is no home, as long as the "holies of holies" is a nidus of moral infection, or a hotbed of physical disease? Fifty years ago, such gloomy questionings were much "in the air." Mr. Simon, afterwards the honoured Sir John Simon, had startled London by his brilliantly written reports as Medical Officer to the Corporation of the City. These were published in 1854, and shocked the conscience and the reason of many. The name of "Model Lodging-House" began to be much talked of. Two new Societies

came into being, the one commercial and fairly remunerative, the other avowedly eleemosynary. They were named respectively, "The Metropolitan Association," and "The Society for Improving the Condition of the Labouring Classes." Of this latter the Prince Consort, then Chancellor of our University, was the President, and Lord Shaftesbury the ever active Chairman.

It is a pleasure to me to remember that as far back as April 1862, in a sermon to my boys at Harrow, I called their attention to these good works, and reminded them that the chief promoter of one of them was our illustrious schoolfellow.

As far back as 1848, that great year of Revolutions, Lord Ashley made an impressive speech in support of the "Public Health Bill," introduced by Lord John Russell's Ministry. He urged the close relation between filth on the one hand and fever and crime on the other. As one result of this debate, the "General Board of Health" was created, which has done so much for sanitary improvement.

Again, in April 1851, the year of the Great Exhibition, he brought in a Bill for the Establishment of Lodging-Houses for the Working Classes. The speech is a picture of horrors drawn from what he had himself seen in repeated visits, and he was able to contrast with these abominations the blessings introduced by the Model Lodging-Houses recently erected.

IV

RAGGED SCHOOLS

It is not a very "far cry" from Lodging-Houses to Ragged Schools. There are at least three leading philanthropists whose names are specially linked with this class of schools. They are Lord Ashley, Dr. Guthrie, and Miss Mary Carpenter. The spheres of their labours were respectively London, Edinburgh, Bristol. For the origin of the movement in England we must go back to February 1843. Then an advertisement appeared in the *Times* from the teachers of the Field Lane Sabbath School. Their school, they say, "was opened in 1841 for instructing, free of expense, those who, from their poverty or ragged condition, are prevented from attending any other place of religious instruction."

Lord Ashley's eye was caught by this advertisement. He at once had an interview with the promoters, placed himself freely at their service, and, till the end of his life, forty-two years after, rejoiced to be their champion and spokesman.

Another man who noticed the lucky advertisement was Charles Dickens. In the campaign

which followed, the arrival on the field of the author of *Oliver Twist* was, as was said of Napoleon, equivalent to a reinforcement of forty thousand soldiers.

As to Lord Ashley, we are told that "the ragged children of London were rarely out of his thoughts, waking or sleeping. He visited them in their wretched homes. He saw them at their daily work. He sat beside them in their schools. He let them come to his house to tell him their troubles. He pleaded for them in religious and political assemblies. He carried their cause first into the House of Commons, and then into the House of Lords. He worked for them also with his pen. In the December number of the *Quarterly Review*, 1846, he contributed an article on "Ragged Schools."

Not that he was the first labourer in this field. In 1841 Sheriff Watson had opened in Aberdeen his first "Industrial Feeding School." In that same year Dr. Guthrie became interested in the cause, and in 1847 published his once famous *Plea for Ragged Schools*, following it up in January 1849 with a second *Plea for Ragged Schools*, in which he showed what had been done in the two past years.

Similarly in 1846, after three years of thinking and planning, Mary Carpenter started a Ragged School in Bristol, and till her death in 1877 made it one of the chief interests of her noble life.

Returning to Lord Ashley, we find him on two occasions, June 6, 1848 and July 4, 1849, pressing

this subject on the House of Commons. From the first of the two speeches a sentence here and there may be taken. He urged the House to help some of these poor boys to emigrate to the Colonies. There were at least thirty thousand of them in London alone, "naked, filthy, roaming, lawless, deserted." Many of these, if not most, lived by crime. Very many had no homes and no known parents. The so-called "homes" of many were but "breeding-places for prisons." The filth and moral foulness in which they grew up was almost incredible. "I would not," he said, "make such assertions if I could not do so on my own personal knowledge. When, in 1846, I lost my seat in Parliament, I determined to explore the unknown parts of the Metropolis. In company with a medical man and a city missionary I have ventured to go over many of those places, and I am able to say that the description I have now given is below the truth."

And yet, we are assured, these poor children had "a singular aptitude to learn." When sent to the Ragged Schools they speedily became changed beings.

In 1848 there were already about sixty Schools in London and its neighbourhood, and some ten thousand boys had passed through them. He concluded a stirring speech by a most earnest appeal: "It will be something that the State, violating no principle, trenching on no right, yielding to no compromise, and incurring no unseen responsibility,

will appear as resolute to prevent as to chastise the commission of crime. She will anticipate the gaoler and the hangman; and we, of the third and fourth generation, who are suffering justly the sins of our fathers, for we have made them our own, will, under God's blessing, take good care not to transmit them to our own posterity."

As a result of this appeal he secured for one year an experimental grant of £1500 to help a number of the boys to emigrate.

V

THE TEN HOURS FACTORY BILL AND LEGISLATION ON MINES AND COLLIERIES

I HAVE reserved to the close that great cause with which the name of Ashley is imperishably linked, the cause which is summed up in the title, "The Ten Hours Factory Bill."

The year 1830 is a convenient year to take for the rise of this movement. At that time the condition of thousands of the children of the poor was truly deplorable. Mines and collieries were worked in great measure by women and children. It was the same in Factories.

The use of machinery since the middle of the eighteenth century had led to the introduction of child labour. Large bodies of children were drafted from the workhouses of London, Edinburgh, and other great cities, and placed in the mills as apprentices, where, at the discretion of sordid overseers, they were treated with sickening brutality. The waste of child life in the Factories was frightful. Day and night the machinery was kept going, one gang of children working it by day, and another set by night, while, in times of

pressure, the same children were kept working both day and night.

The year 1830 or thereabouts is in many ways the beginning of a new age. The movement which issued in the great Reform Bill was already astir. As regards the Factories, in that year a small number of men, of whom Richard Oastler and the Rev. G. S. Bull were two, presented a number of petitions to Parliament for the limitation of child labour.

At last, in 1831, Mr. Michael Sadler introduced into the House this Ten Hours Bill, and on March 18, 1832, moved its second reading in what is called a speech of "extraordinary eloquence."

A select committee was appointed to inquire.

Then came the carrying of the Reform Bill and the first election. In this election Mr. Sadler lost his seat, though he was eagerly supported by the working classes. His rejection was regarded as a grievous blow by many, including Tories like Robert Southey, the Poet Laureate. "Who is there," he wrote to young Lord Ashley, "who will take up the question of our White Slave Trade with equal feeling? They who grow cotton are merciful task-masters in comparison with those who manufacture it."

However, in losing one brave champion, the friends of the cause found another not less staunch and far more powerful. They applied to Lord Ashley, then a young man of thirty-two, to be their leader, and after a night of solemn reflection he consented. From that hour, having once put

his hand to the plough, he never "looked back." He felt that he had received a call. "I believe," he said to a friend, "it is my duty to God and to the poor, and I trust He will support me. Talk of trouble! What do we come to Parliament for?"

When he laid the matter before his noble-hearted young wife, and "painted in dark colours all the sacrifice it meant" for her, her answer was worthy of herself and her husband.

"It is your duty," she said; "and the consequences we must leave. Go forward, and to victory!"

The campaign then begun lasted, roughly speaking, till 1850, some seventeen years. Wilberforce had needed twenty for the abolition of the Black Slave Trade.

You may like to hear a few details as to the spirit in which it was planned, and as to some of its most exciting incidents.

Lord Ashley from the first insisted that all should be done peacefully and constitutionally, no strikes, no intimidation, no violent language.

As to speeches of his own, besides innumerable harangues in the country, he has published seven which he delivered in the House of Commons, covering some eight years, from 1838 to 1846.

In July 1838, he had startled the House by revealing the wretched state of children in Factories. Two years later, in August, he had appealed on behalf of another large group of children, those not protected by the Factory Acts. A committee of inquiry was the result.

But at this point, this Coblenz, the stream of our narrative receives an affluent so powerful that we must for a few moments follow its course. Factory legislation, strictly understood, was interrupted, and yet greatly enlarged in volume and in force, by the legislation needed for Mines and Collieries. The cruelties and needs of the one were, in fact, the cruelties and needs of the other.

On June 7, 1842, Lord Ashley stirred the House in an almost unprecedented manner by detailing the miseries of children in these Mines and Collieries. Much, he felt, was at stake that night.

"As I stood at the table," so he wrote two days later in his *Journal*, "and just before I opened my mouth, the words of God came forcibly to my mind, 'Only be strong and of a good courage.' Praised be His holy Name, I was as easy from that moment as though I had been sitting in an arm-chair."

The speech occupied two hours. From first to last it is packed with sufferings, the sufferings of little children prolonged hour after hour, the sufferings chiefly and the shame of girls.

"It is bad enough," said Ashley, "if you corrupt the man; but if you corrupt the woman, you poison the water of life at the very fountain."

He had been accused during the debate of advocating a kind of legislation which would bring back the "barbarism" of the Middle Ages, and he ended by saying, "Is it not enough to announce these things to an assembly of Christian men and British gentlemen? For twenty millions of money you

purchased the liberation of the Negro, and it was a blessed deed. You may this night, by a cheap and harmless vote, invigorate the hearts of thousands of your country people, enable them to walk erect in newness of life, to enter on the enjoyment of their inherited freedom, and avail themselves of the opportunities of virtue, of morality, and religion. These, Sir, are the ends that I venture to propose. This is the 'barbarism' that I seek to restore. The House will forgive me for venturing to conclude by imploring them, in the words of Holy Writ, 'to break off our sins by righteousness, and our iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of our tranquillity.' "

The chief result of this great speech was an Act of Parliament prohibiting female labour in Mines. Another less visible, but lasting, result was the change which it effected in the sentiments of one remarkable man. Richard Cobden, then agitating vehemently for the repeal of the Corn Laws, had so far steadily opposed Lord Ashley in all his attempts at Factory legislation. But he made no opposition to the Mines and Collieries Bill. "On the contrary," we are told, Cobden came to him at the conclusion of his speech, and, sitting down on the bench beside him, wrung his hand heartily, and said, "You know how opposed I have been to your views; but I don't think I have ever been put into such a frame of mind, in the whole course of my life, as I have been by your speech." ¹

¹ *Life and Work*, i. p. 425.

The Mines and Collieries Bill was, as we said, a kind of affluent to Factory Legislation. We must now return to the main stream. The years 1844 to the January of 1846 are, perhaps, the most critical period in Lord Ashley's life. They are darkened by the shadow of his gradual alienation from his warm friend and political chief, Sir Robert Peel, then at the height of his power as Prime Minister. As early as 1842 he had come to the conclusion that he could expect no help from either Peel himself or his Home Secretary, Sir James Graham.

In the spring of 1844 he resolved to make a vigorous effort to carry a Ten Hours Bill. On March 15 he spoke for upwards of two hours. It is one of his finest speeches. As in dealing with the Mines and Collieries, so here he shows the terrible sufferings inflicted upon children, and especially on women, by the present arrangements of labour—the number of miles, not less than twenty-five, that some of them have to “trot” daily in the Factory while attending to the machines, the diseases, the stunted growth, the cruel pains that follow. He urges the sanctity of motherhood. Women must not be so treated that the growth of healthy children and a sound moral training in childhood shall be impossible. “It matters not,” he cries, “whether it be prince or peasant, all that is best, all that is lasting in the character of a man, he has learnt at his mother's knees.” This “mainstay of social peace and virtue, and therein of national security,” must not be annulled. Lastly,

turning to the great merchant princes of the north, who resent so bitterly his interference with their mills, "most solemnly," he says, "do I deny the accusation that I desire to exalt the landed and humiliate the commercial aristocracy. No, we fear not the increase of your political power nor envy your stupendous riches. 'Peace be within your walls, and plenteousness within your palaces !' We ask but a slight relaxation of toil ; 'a time to live, and a time to die ' ; a time for those comforts that sweeten life, and a time for those duties that adorn it ; and therefore, with a fervent prayer to Almighty God that it may please Him to turn the hearts of all who hear me to thoughts of justice and of mercy, I now finally commit the issue to the judgment and humanity of Parliament." ¹

In answer to this appeal Sir James Graham and Sir Robert Peel announced that they could in no way assent to a proposal limiting the labour of woman and children to ten hours a day. A division was taken, and the Government, the all-powerful Government of Peel, were beaten by eight votes.

Nearly two months later, after the Easter Recess, Lord Ashley moved a new clause in favour of Ten hours, the Government having made it known that, unless the former vote was rescinded, they would resign. His task was a hard one. First he set himself to show that the reduction of working hours would cause no diminution of produce nor any fall in wages. Then, with much earnestness, he attacked the Government for their despotic and

¹ *Speeches*, p. 115.

imperious resolve. "The House," he complained, "is summoned to cancel its vote, not upon conviction, but to save a Government. . . . Sir, it is possible, nay, more, it is probable, for their efforts have been great, that Her Majesty's Ministers will carry the day; but for how long? . . . It may not be given to me to pass over this Jordan. Other and better men have preceded me, and I entered into their labours. Other and better men will follow me, and enter into mine. But this consolation I shall ever continue to enjoy, that amidst much injustice, and somewhat of calumny, we have at last lighted such a candle in England as, by God's blessing, shall never be put out." The defeat, so clearly foreseen, was crushing. The Government had a majority of a hundred and thirty-eight.

Many years afterwards, Lord Shaftesbury told me that he had never felt so much forsaken by God and man as on that memorable night, May 13, 1844. From that time he never recovered his confidence in Peel. Letters passed between them, dignified and courteous on both sides, but the breach was never wholly repaired.

Nearly two years passed, and then Ashley made one more effort in the same cause. A great political crisis had arisen. Sir Robert Peel had resigned office, and again resumed it on the failure of Lord John Russell to form an administration.

Lord Ashley, feeling that he could no longer advocate Protection, resolved to resign his seat for Dorset. He resigned on January 31, 1846, but,

two days before, made a third "full-dress" speech on the Ten Hours Bill. He argued at great length, and with a phalanx of well-marshalled facts in support, that all fears as to limiting the hours of work had so far been disproved by events. He again insists on the national danger of over-working or degrading those who are to be the mothers of the coming race, quoting the famous answer of Madame Campan to the Emperor Napoleon: "What shall I do," he asked her, "for the benefit of France?" "Give us, Sire, a generation of mothers!"

The Bill was read a first time. Two days after, he ceased to be a Member of Parliament, and the future management of the cause was entrusted to Mr. Fielden, member for Oldham, who moved early next year for leave to bring in the well-known Bill.

Lord Ashley, excluded from the House, has two significant entries in his Diary. March 1, "Intense anxiety about Factory Bill. I dream of it by day and by night, and work as though I had still charge of it."

And again, March 17, "Long labour yesterday in furnishing John Russell," now Prime Minister, "at his request, with notes for his speech."

On March 3 the second reading was carried by a majority of a hundred and eight, Sir Robert Peel, now for some nine months in Opposition, speaking and voting in the minority.¹

¹ The difference between Lord Ashley and Sir Robert Peel is here stated from the point of view of the former. Those who wish to know the reasons which influenced Peel can find them in his speeches on March 18 and May 13, 1844, when he was Prime Minister, and on March 3, 1847, when he had been eight months out of office. This

Finally, on May 3, the third reading was carried by a majority of sixty-three. On June 1 the Bill was approved by the House of Lords, nearly every Bishop having voted for it.

The victory was received with enthusiasm by the manufacturing districts, including many of the mill-owners. Lord Ashley and Mr. Fielden were greeted with ovations wherever they went. A medal was struck, and the Queen was pleased to receive at the hands of Lord Ashley one of these medals sent her by the Factory operatives.

In his own *Journal* we come upon the words: "What reward shall we give unto the Lord for all the benefits He hath conferred upon us?" Opinions then differed widely as to the value of this memorable campaign. Does any one now seriously doubt that it was a bit of genuine "Christian work," worthy to rank high in the annals of the second third of the Nineteenth Century?

last speech ends as follows: "Sir, I will now conclude by repeating that if I oppose this Bill, it is not because I do not sympathise with the attempt to improve and to elevate the working classes in the scale of society, but because I believe that an unwise interference with labour will undermine the great sources of our national wealth, and will also restrict and fetter the comfort and enjoyment and independence of the working classes. It is on these grounds that, acknowledging as I fully do, the special claims which those classes have upon my sympathy and support, I must give a vote in opposition to their wishes, but in favour of their real and permanent welfare."

The speech of May 13, 1844, which secured the majority of 138, is the one of which the Russian Ambassador wrote to Count Nesselrode: "Son discours, prononcé d'une voix forte et mâle, a produit sur la Chambre l'impression la plus profonde. Jamais, à aucune autre occasion, je n'ai entendu Sir R. Peel parler avec tant d'énergie."—*Life of Sir R. Peel*. C. S. Parker, iii. 149.

VI

CONCLUSION

My friends, it is high time to close. We have been turning a backward look on sufferings long endured and but recently, some but very partially, remedied. Of those sufferings the greater part was undergone by children of tender years, little boys and little girls. The "cry of the children," as it fell on the ear of Mrs. Browning, at last reached the ear of the nation. To many their silence, their unconscious, inarticulate, uncomplaining silence, was even more eloquent than their cry. Besides children, there were Lunatics. And, further again, there were helpless women, who, whether in Mines, in Factories, or in agricultural gangs, were habitually overworked, insulted, degraded, ruined alike in mind and body, the miserable unsexed mothers of children pre-destined to a like doom. While these horrors were being blindly perpetrated, there was room for "Christian work." And as it must always be to the shame of our Century that such horrors so long existed, so it will be part of its glory that men and women were at last raised up to expose and vanquish them, braving every form of

hatred, and misrepresentation, "enduring the cross, despising the shame." These Christian workers were, thank God, many. They were not confined to any class, to either sex, to any one branch of the Christian Church. There was work for minds so different in their training and their creed as Manning and Martineau, Sydney Smith and Frederic Maurice, Charles Kingsley and Charles Lowder, Elizabeth Fry and Mary Carpenter.

Of these many workers I have selected one, but with no thought of disparaging the work of others. To himself such disparagement would have been more than repugnant, it would have been hateful. He was modest as to his own achievements, and he loved to give every man his due.

"Do not attempt," he said to his affectionate biographer, "do not attempt to represent me as always in the right, or you will inevitably break down in your task. . . . Above all things, try to do justice to those who laboured with me. I could never have done the few things I have done had I not been supported by true, zealous, earnest men, who gave me their time and their brains to help forward the different movements." Such was his own estimate of himself and of his many helpers. As for ourselves, without for a moment depreciating what he owed to others, we can see that he brought to the cause of the poor and needy "many excellent gifts"—high birth, an illustrious name, powerful kinsmen, a noble-hearted wife, a stout heart, an unshrinking faith, a burning zeal, a sleepless sym-

pathy with suffering, a stirring eloquence, an inflexible purpose. "Freely he had received, freely he gave." And yet this man was keenly sensitive to the abuse which he encountered. He was not one of those "pachydermatous" persons—a shocking word, which I hope no one here understands—who can receive into their hides the fiery darts of assailants without a wince or even a grimace. In 1845 we find him writing: "At times I almost quail when I think of the concentrated hatred against me. After all, what have I done to provoke such constant, minute, and pointed hatred?" In truth he was treading the common path of virtue. As Burke said, in his majestic style, nearly a hundred and twenty years ago, "This is the road that all heroes have trod before him. He is traduced and abused for his supposed motives. He will remember that obloquy is a necessary ingredient in all true glory, and that calumny and abuse are essential parts of triumph."

A noble and stately consolation, not unworthy of a Spartan, a Roman, or even a Christian. But to a spirit like that of Ashley there would have been month by month, and year by year, a nearer and a dearer consolation in those words that shall never pass away, and, when heard, never fail to "turn to flight the armies of the alien:" "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

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JOHN BRIGHT

EARLY in this century, but at an interval of ten years from each other, two men were born who were destined before they died to do much for the relief of their poor fellow-countrymen. One of them at the age of twenty-four is found writing in his Journal, "I have a great mind to found a policy upon the Bible; in public life observing the strictest justice, and not only cold justice, but active benevolence. Justice, raw justice, is the Shekinah of governments."¹

The other of these two men is found saying in public four times within four years: "I most devoutly believe that the moral law was not written for men alone in their individual character, but that it was written as well for nations."² Again, "For twenty-five years I have stood before great meetings of my countrymen, pleading only for justice. I have laboured to expound and uphold laws which, though they were not given amid the thunders of Sinai, are not less the commandments of God, and are not less intended to promote and secure the happiness of men."³ Yet again:

¹ Lord Ashley's *Journal*, Oct. 13. 1824. *Life and Work*, vol. i. p. 54.

² *Bright's Speeches*, vol. ii. p. 399.

³ *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 350.

"There always comes to my aid a feeling which I have had ever since I entered the political field, a deep and abiding faith in justice. I believe that justice may be called, of all things, the miracle-worker among men, and that all men are to be reached by it."¹ Once more, "In my humble way I endeavour always to speak publicly to my countrymen as a preacher of political righteousness and justice. I believe that it is in this way only that the unity, true glory, and the happiness of States can be built up."²

One might have hoped that two men with so much in common might have stood together, shoulder to shoulder, on many a field dear to the memory of mankind.

But it was not so to be. I know of few facts more pathetic in the careers of public men than that those two great champions of justice and morality, those two lifelong friends of the poor, the wronged and the degraded, Lord Shaftesbury and John Bright, regarded each other as bitter and almost malignant opponents. Of the elder of these great men we spoke yesterday. Of John Bright we have to speak this evening. And let me at once explain the limits of my ambition. I am not here as his biographer, his painter, or his critic. I shall make no attempt to portray him as a whole. I shall be more than content if I can help any of you to see him, not as the stormy petrel of politics, or as the strenuous fighter neither

¹ *Bright's Speeches*, vol. iii. p. 525.

² *Ibid.* vol. iii. p. 509.

giving nor caring to receive quarter, but as what he certainly desired and strove to be, "a preacher of political righteousness and justice." Do not be alarmed at this most formidable of titles. Had he been literally and professionally a Preacher, he would have had few equals. He would have brought to his Pulpit the supreme credentials of passionate love of truth, a courage like that of Knox or of Luther, a mastery of both the sweetness and the majesty of the English tongue, clear, elevated thought, burning hatred of wrong, and a pervading consciousness, never disavowed but never coarsely paraded, of being entrusted with more than an earthly message. His speeches have a wide range. They deal with subjects so different as Free Trade, Reform, the Government of India, the Government of Canada, the Government of Ireland, the American War, the Russian War. I hope to show you, through extracts from a very few of these, how he bore himself in that *rôle* which we have selected, the *rôle* not of the gladiator, nor of the pugilist, but of the "preacher of justice."

I

FREE TRADE

WHERE then shall we begin ? Probably your first thought of John Bright is as the apostle of Free Trade, as the chief comrade of Cobden in the great fight with the Corn Laws. He was born in 1811, and became a Cotton Spinner and Manufacturer at Rochdale. In 1839 he joined the Anti-Corn Law League, which was destined, within seven years, aided by a terrible famine in Ireland, to bring to its knees the strongest Ministry that England had known since the resignation of Mr. Pitt in 1801. During those seven years Bright was unwearied in denouncing the Corn Laws, first in all parts of the kingdom, and, after 1843, in the House of Commons also.

The first of his published speeches on the subject was just at the end of 1845, on December 19. Let me ask you to note the date. The moment was stirring, one might almost say electric. Early in November Sir Robert Peel had satisfied himself that Protection was doomed. The Cabinet met again and again. Strange rumours as to its intentions got abroad. Finding that only a few of his

colleagues were prepared to assist him in repealing the Corn Laws, Peel placed his resignation in the hands of the Queen. This was on December 6. Lord John Russell was commissioned to form a Government, and on December 18 announced that he was ready.

On December 19, Peel was desired to go to Windsor next day to give up the seals of office ; but when he arrived, he was told, to his amazement, that Lord John had, after all, failed. He returned to London that afternoon as once more Prime Minister, summoned all his late colleagues at 9.30 p.m., and now all of them, with the important exception of Lord Stanley, agreed to support him in his new course.

It was on the night before, when the public knew only vaguely what was passing, that a great meeting of the League was held in Covent Garden Theatre, and Mr. Bright was a leading speaker. "He fears," he says, "that what some deprecate, 'a strife of classes,' has already begun." The struggle "is that of the many against the few." "As the whole people, we can by no possibility have the smallest interest in any partial or unjust legislation. We do not wish to sacrifice any right of the richest or most powerful class, but we are resolved that that class shall not sacrifice the rights of a whole people."

After reminding his eager hearers that the contest has now been waged for seven years, he insists on its seriousness by one argument almost grim in its pathos. "Since we first came to London to ask

the attention of Parliament to the question of the Corn Law, two millions of human beings have been added to the population of the United Kingdom. The table is here, as before. The food is spread in about the same quantity as before. But two millions of fresh guests have arrived. These two millions are so many arguments for the Anti-Corn Law League, so many emphatic condemnations of the policy of this iniquitous law. I see them now in my mind's eye ranged before me, old men and young children, all looking to the Government for bread ; some endeavouring to resist the stroke of famine, clamorous and turbulent, but still arguing with us ; some dying mute and uncomplaining. Multitudes have died of hunger since we first asked the Government to repeal the Corn Law ; and although the great and powerful may not regard those who suffer mutely and die in silence, yet the recording angel will note down their patient endurance and the heavy guilt of those by whom they have been sacrificed.”¹ He passes on to “the fearful sufferings of the poor rural labourers in almost every part of the kingdom. They are heart-broken, spirit-broken, despairing men. One of their own poets has well expressed their condition :

“ A blessed prospect—

To slave while there is strength, in age the workhouse,
A parish shell at last, and the little bell
Toll'd hastily for a pauper's funeral.’ ”

¹ *Bright's Speeches*, vol. ii. p. 278.

It was with memories of this kind in his heart that Bright in after days—the bitterness of the strife gone, the joy of the deliverance remaining—would go back to the first and the chief struggle of his life.

Thirty-two years later, in 1877, he was called upon to unveil the statue of his old friend Cobden. His speech at that unveiling is for sheer beauty one of the very finest of all his efforts. Nay, it is no “effort” at all. As he might himself have said, “You may almost hear the beating of his heart.” “For seven years,” he says, “the discussion on that one question, whether it was good for a man to have half a loaf or a whole loaf, for seven years the discussion was maintained. The sufferings throughout the country were fearful. At last a great Minister was converted, and minorities became majorities, and finally the barrier was entirely thrown down. And since then, though there has been suffering, and much suffering, in many homes in England, yet no wife and no mother and no little child has been starved to death as the result of a famine made by law. Now our fleets traverse every sea, and visit every port, and bring us the food which only about thirty years ago the laws of this civilised and Christian country denied to its people. You find it in Holy Writ that ‘The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof.’ We have put Holy Writ into an Act of Parliament, and since then of that fulness every man and woman and little child in this country may freely and abundantly partake.”

“We have put Holy Writ into an Act of Parliament.” Nobly said, surely. It might have been said by a Wilberforce, a Buxton, an Ashley, not by many more even of our most revered statesmen. It is part of that living faith in justice, the abiding justice of the Eternal, which makes the difference between man and man.

II

REFORM

NEXT to Free Trade, there is, I suppose, no subject of home politics with which Mr. Bright's name is more closely connected than the "Reform of the House of Commons." To this no less than thirteen of his speeches are devoted. In point of oratorical power they rank among his best, although he had said at the close of the first,¹ referring to his recent grave illness of two years, "As for me, my voice is feeble. I feel now sensibly and painfully that I am not what I was. I speak with diminished fire. I act with a lessened force. But as I am, my countrymen and my constituents, I will, if you will let me, be found in your ranks in the impending struggle."

In girding himself for this struggle, which was to last no less than ten years, Bright was penetrated by a profound conviction that it was part of that great cause of justice to which he had dedicated his life. He believed in the British Constitution. He believed in the good sense and self-control of even the poorest, the most ignorant, and the most

¹ *Bright's Speeches*, vol. ii. p. 30.

tempted of his countrymen. He held that no one class could be trusted to govern or to legislate for others. He looked upon a man without a vote as a Pariah, a Coolie, a Chinese, an Uitlander.

When he opened his campaign at Birmingham in October 1858, his object was to rouse the country, which for a year and more had been almost absorbed in the outbreak, the horrors, and the suppression of the Indian Mutiny. He had convinced himself, and was resolved to convince others, that the time had come for a wide extension of the Franchise.

In carrying out this task, it was, I suppose, unavoidable that he should lay himself open to the charge of "setting class against class"; and probably he was only half conscious of the wounds which he inflicted and the sting which he left in the wound. The suggestion that our "foreign policy was neither more nor less than a gigantic system of outdoor relief for the aristocracy of Great Britain"; or again, that "the accession to office of Lord Derby was a declaration of war against the working classes," was hardly calculated to conciliate opponents.

At the same time, Bright was no vulgar leveller as regards ranks, or boorish Vandal as regards institutions. There was in him much true reverence, much pride of country, much belief in the freedom descended from older and, as he thought, happier times. The august, the stately, what Burke might have called the "canonised," elements in

the national life had a place in his imagination and his heart. And sometimes, nay, often, these in-born instincts found noble utterance such as has passed few other English lips.

Let me give you a few samples.

“What,” he once asked, “is the British Constitution? I never saw it. I never heard of anybody who had handled it. It is not in any of the books. But there is, notwithstanding, something that we all understand by the British Constitution.”

Again, “We are proud of our country, and there are many things in it which, as far as men may rightly be proud, we may be proud of. . . . England is the mother of Parliaments. . . . I claim for my countrymen the right of admission, through their representatives, into the most ancient and the most venerable Parliament which at this hour exists among men; and when they are thus admitted, and not till then, it may be truly said that England, the august mother of free nations, is herself free.”

Again, “What I want is to give the sense of justice to a great class now labouring under a sense of long-continued injustice.”

Again, “Our object is this—to restore the British Constitution in all its fulness, with all its freedom, to the British people.”

Once more, “I am in accord with our ancient Constitution. I would stand by it. Wherever it afforded support for freedom, I would walk in its track. That track is so plain that the ‘wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein.’ I would

be guided by its lights. They have been kept burning by great men among our forefathers for many generations. Our only safety in this warfare is in adhering to the ancient and noble Constitution of our country."

Are we not here a little startled? Who is it to whom we are listening? Do we not begin to whisper, "Is Saul also among the prophets? Is Bright also among the Burkes?"

Nay, this man, who was so dreaded and hated forty years ago as a mixture of Attila and Cromwell, had within him a spirit profoundly conservative, and, one might almost say, "laboured more abundantly than they all" to revere the old watchwords and stand on the old paths. But he must interpret himself.

If I have not quite wearied you, I will ask you to listen to yet two more quotations, one an appeal to those who can, if they will, confer the franchise; the other an appeal to those who are eager to receive it.

"My policy," he said to the House of Commons in 1866, "is a policy conservative of the public welfare, strengthening the just authority of Parliament, and adding from day to day fresh lustre and dignity to the Crown. And now when I speak to you and ask you to receive this Bill, when I plead on behalf of those who are not allowed to speak themselves in this House, if you could raise yourselves for this night, for this hour, above the region of party strife, if you could free yourselves from

the pestilent atmosphere of passion and prejudice which so often surrounds us here, I feel confident that at this moment I should not plead in vain before this Imperial Parliament on behalf of the English Constitution and the English people."

There you have the dangerous firebrand blazing forth, but with lambent fire, before a not too sympathetic Parliament. Now follow me, some eight months after, from the Palace of Westminster to St. James's Hall, from the proud House of Commons to a vast meeting of Trades' Unions and Trade Societies, and let us see how the turbulent Radical addresses his fellow-Radicals, who adore him. He is defending himself against a grave charge, that of "setting class against class."

"These opponents of ours," he says, "many of them in Parliament openly, and many of them secretly in the Press, have charged us with being the promoters of a dangerous excitement. They say *we* are the source of the danger which threatens. They have absolutely the effrontery to charge *me* with being the friend of public disorder. I am one of the people. Surely, if there be one thing in a free country more clear than another, it is that any one of the people may speak openly to the people. If I speak to the people of their rights, and indicate to them the way to secure them ; if I speak of their danger to the monopolists of power, am I not a wise counsellor, both to the people and to their rulers ? Suppose I stood at the foot of Vesuvius or Etna, and, seeing a hamlet or a home-

stead planted on its slope, I said to the dwellers in that hamlet or in that homestead, 'You see that vapour which ascends from the summit of the mountain? That vapour may become a dense, black smoke that will obscure the sky. You see that trickling of lava from the crevices or fissures in the side of the mountain? That trickling of lava may become a river of fire. You hear that muttering in the bowels of the mountain? That muttering may become a bellowing thunder, the voice of a violent convulsion that may shake half a continent. You know that at your feet is the grave of great cities for which there is no resurrection, as history tells us that dynasties and aristocracies have passed away, and their name has been known no more for ever.' If I say this to the dwellers upon the slope of the mountain, and if there comes hereafter a catastrophe which makes the world to shudder, am *I* responsible for that catastrophe? *I* did not build the mountain or fill it with explosive materials. I merely warned the men that were in danger."

I have been told by a friend¹ who was then present, and is himself no mean orator, that as this great passage closed, the whole vast audience rose to their feet and cheered for many minutes.

¹ The late Dean Farrar.

III

HIS HUMOUR

PERHAPS I may be allowed, my friends, at this point to make an admission which some of you may blame, but most, I know, will applaud. I have carefully omitted, in my quotations so far, almost every passage which in any way savoured, I will not say of levity, for there is really no levity in Bright, but of what we call humour. And yet Bright is a great humorist. In his ninety published speeches there are, I am bound to confess, not a few passages which might tempt an average audience to laugh. But then you are not "an average audience." You are not a motley crowd at the Hen and Chickens Hotel at Birmingham, or at the Free Trade Hall at Manchester, or in the New Theatre at his own Rochdale. You might justly have bridled up if, on an occasion like this, and in a Hall like this, dedicated to the Tragic Muse, I had distracted your attention by obtruding upon you a great orator's sallies, which once, I cannot deny, convulsed his hearers, and not his hearers only, but thousands also of

readers next morning, some of whom were also his victims.

It may perhaps be pardonable just to name a few of these in passing. Those austere pilgrims who care for none of these things can haughtily close their ears for a few minutes. The minority, if there be one, may listen furtively, and pardon.

Well, then, my kind friends of the minority, let me reveal to you in confidence one secret of Mr. Bright's humour. It abounds not, like Sheridan's, in sharp pointed sayings, but, like Sydney Smith's, in bold, broadly painted images. To do justice to these, you have to use your eyes as well as your ears. Let us recall a few which once were famous.

In his fourth speech on the war with Russia, Bright is girding rather unkindly at poor Lord John Russell, who, you may perhaps have gathered from *Punch*, was not a man physically of colossal proportions. Bright is speaking of this statesman's final collapse, when, at the mere notice by Mr. Roebuck of a vote of censure, he thought fit to throw up his place in Lord Aberdeen's Cabinet. Now for the image :

"The Member for Sheffield, Mr. Roebuck," says Bright, "came forward as a little David with sling and stone, weapons which he did not even use, but at the *sight* of which the Whig Goliath went howling and vanquished to the back benches." The Whig Goliath !

Again, the image of the great Whig houses with their monopoly of public offices :

“The jackals of the Syrian desert follow their prey in families, like the place-hunters of Europe.”¹

Again, the Tory Derby Government that passed their Radical Reform Bill, adopting for the time, and much against their will, the colours and the tones of Liberal reformers :

“The Christy minstrels,” says Bright, “when they are clean washed, are, I understand, white men ; but they come before the audience as black as the blackest negroes. The Derby minstrels pretend to be Liberal and white ; but the fact is, if you come nearer and examine them closely, you will find them to be just as black and curly as the Tories have ever been.”²

Again, the sombre image of the Pelican and the Fish-hawk borrowed from Dr. Livingstone :

The poor pelican is “a dull, stupid bird which catches his fish by the riverside, and puts them into a pouch or purse under his bill. The fish-hawk is another bird, neither dull nor stupid. He hovers over the pelican, comes down upon him with a swoop, and takes the fish from the pouch or purse, leaving the pelican delighted that the hawk has not taken him bodily away, and setting to work at once to catch another fish.”

I leave it to you, my friends, to apply this image of pathetic patience to the simple-hearted taxpayer and the “great Government fish-hawk.”

One more of these wicked “images,” and then we will all return to the paths of virtue, from which

¹ *Bright's Speeches*, vol. ii. p. 381.

² *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 194.

the majority of my readers have never strayed. Who has not read of the famous "party of two," the political alliance between the two "superior persons" of the House of Commons, Mr. Edward Horsman and Mr. Robert Lowe ?

"When," says Bright, "a party is formed of two men, so amiable, so discreet as the two Right Hon. gentlemen, we may hope to see for the first time in Parliament a party perfectly harmonious and distinguished by mutual and unbroken trust. But there is one difficulty which it is impossible to remove. This 'party of two' reminds me of the Scotch terrier, which was so covered with hair that you could not tell which was the head and which was the tail of it." ¹

That immortal Scotch terrier ! It says so little, and it means so much.

¹ *Bright's Speeches*, vol. ii. p. 144.

IV

THE CRIMEAN WAR

So far we have followed the great Tribune through some stormy passages at home. We have now to note his bearing as, at a stern crisis of history, he, almost alone, "labours for peace" while four great nations "make them ready for battle."

It is perhaps by his speeches on the Russian War that Bright is best known as an orator. He was then in his prime. He was forty-three years of age. He had been over ten years in the House. Further, he was passionately in earnest. He stood apart from the great mass of his countrymen. He stood on his watch-tower, like an old Prophet, indignant, appalled, exasperated, impotent to check or to guide, and yet a moral force to be reckoned with.

It was in the latter part of 1853 that our dispute with the Emperor Nicholas began.

Gradually, as Lord Clarendon said, we "drifted" towards war.

At last, on March 31, 1854, came the Message from the Crown announcing the actual declaration of war.

Mr. Bright was only too conscious that, as he said, he was "like a physician proposing to prescribe to-day for a man who died yesterday," but he addressed himself to his hopeless and belated task. He objected to everything—to the folly of bolstering up an effete power like Turkey ; to the fetish of the "Balance of Power," always the reddest of rags to his flaming eyes ; to the assumption that the interests of England were in any way concerned ; to the delusion that you could confine or dismember Russia, as if she "were a Power that you could take to Bow Street, and bind over before some stipendiary magistrate to keep the peace for six months." He ends a closely reasoned argument with words which one still seems to hear rather than to read :

"I believe if this country, seventy years ago, had adopted the principle of non-intervention in every case where her interests were not directly and obviously assailed, that she would have been saved from much of the pauperism and brutal crimes by which our Government and people have alike been disgraced. This country might have been a garden, every dwelling might have been of marble, and every person who treads its soil might have been sufficiently educated.

"We should indeed have had less of military glory. We might have had neither Trafalgar nor Waterloo ; but we should have set the high example of a Christian nation, free in its institutions, courteous and just in its conduct towards all foreign states,

and resting its policy on the unchangeable foundation of Christian morality."

Nine months later the war was upon us. Alma, Balaclava, and Inkerman had been fought. Two ill-fated transports, the *Prince* and the *Resolute*, had gone down in the great storm of November 14, carrying with them vast stores and, not least, the winter clothing of our sorely stricken troops. In that storm it was reckoned that a thousand lives were lost, and shipping to the value of £2,000,000 sterling. The horrors of that winter form a tearful page in the history of our country. To a man like Bright it was more than "tearful." It was like the roll of the Prophet, "written within and without ; and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe." He bitterly arraigns our conduct before the war broke out. He complains that for six weeks or two months no Cabinet meeting was held. Instead of this the Lord President was "making a small speech on a great subject somewhere in Cumberland "; and then follow those famous sentences which are said to have caused an overflow in not a few eyes : " We all know what we have lost in this House. Here, sitting near me, very often sat the Member for Frome, Colonel Boyle. I met him a short time before he went out, at Mr. Westerton's, the bookseller, near Hyde Park Corner. I asked him whether he was going out. He answered he was afraid he was. Not afraid in the sense of personal fear ; he knew not that ; but he said, with a look and a tone I shall never forget, ' It

is no light matter for a man who has a wife and five little children.' The stormy Euxine is his grave. His wife is a widow, his children fatherless."

Soon after he says, "This has been a terribly destructive war to officers. They have been, as one would have expected them to be, the first in valour as the first in place. They have suffered more, in proportion to their numbers, than the commonest soldiers in the ranks. This has spread sorrow over the whole country. I was in the House of Lords when the vote of thanks was moved. In the gallery were many ladies, three-fourths of whom were dressed in the deepest mourning."

My friends, is this ancient or modern history ? Am I quoting from a speech of 1854 or from a newspaper report to-day ?

A month later, at the end of January 1855, the all-powerful Ministry of Lord Aberdeen fell. It fell by a majority of a hundred and fifty-seven. This strange result was hailed with a shout of derisive laughter.

Lord Palmerston became Prime Minister. A few days afterwards, four of his colleagues, and those among the ablest, resigned: Sir James Graham, Peel's trusted ally; Mr. Sidney Herbert, the Soldiers' friend; Mr. Cardwell, who, many years after, carried out the Abolition of Purchase; and Mr. Gladstone, still flushed with his early financial triumphs.

The new Ministry, scarcely yet come to the birth, might well seem to reel under such heavy

blows. It was on the very day after the announcement of these resignations that Mr. Bright delivered his third speech on the Russian War. It is a short speech. It is intensely serious. It contains one passage that can only perish with the English language.

“The present position,” as he says in his very first sentence, “was one of more than ordinary gravity.” Indeed, the old question that had puzzled Wellington was again in men’s mouths, “How can the Queen’s Government be carried on ? ” So many of our leading men were powerless, or out of office, or discredited.

Bright cordially disliked Palmerston, and Palmerston disliked Bright. When the old statesman died in 1865, Lord Shaftesbury, his kinsman, writes in his *Journal* a week after, “Palmerston had but two real enemies, Bright and Gladstone.” Of these two, the one had just left his Cabinet ; the other, Bright, had, two months before, charged him with “buffoonery” at a public dinner, and was destined to say of him, some three months later, “I have observed the noble Viscount’s conduct ever since I have had the honour of a seat in this House, and the noble Viscount will excuse me if I state the reason why I have often opposed him. . . . I regard him as a man who has experience, but who with experience has not gained wisdom ; as a man who has age, but who with age has not the gravity of age ; and who, now occupying the highest seat of power, has, and I say it with pain,

not appeared influenced by a due sense of the responsibility that belongs to that exalted position."

Such were Bright's publicly expressed sentiments in December 1854 and June 1855; but in February 1855, just as Palmerston took office at that most anxious crisis and had shed his four powerful colleagues, Bright's language was exceptionally gentle. It was the language of appeal rather than of invective or even remonstrance.

He recognises, as we said before, that the "position is one of more than ordinary gravity"; that for a month past there has been "a chaos in the regions of the Administration"; that if the country is to be saved from the breakers which now surround it, there must be a Government; and further, that Lord Palmerston, from his authority abroad as well as at home, has the power beyond any other statesman of concluding an honourable peace.

To him, therefore, as well as to the House at large, Bright makes a strong personal appeal. The air is full both of opportunities and of apprehensions.

"I cannot," he says, "but notice that an uneasy feeling exists as to the news which may arrive by the very next mail from the East. I do not suppose that your troops are to be beaten in actual conflict with the foe, or that they will be driven into the sea; but I am certain that many homes in England in which there now exists a fond hope that the distant one may return—many such homes may be rendered desolate when the next mail shall

arrive. *The angel of death has been abroad throughout the land ; you may almost hear the beating of his wings.* There is no one, as when the first-born were slain of old, to sprinkle with blood the lintel and the two sideposts of our doors, that he may spare and pass on. He takes his victims from the castle of the noble, the mansion of the wealthy, and the cottage of the poor and the lowly, and it is on behalf of all these classes that I make this solemn appeal. . . . By adopting the course which I now press upon the noble Lord, he would have the satisfaction of reflecting that, having obtained the object of his laudable ambition—having become the foremost subject of the Crown, the director of, it may be, the destinies of his country and the presiding genius in her councils—he had achieved a still higher and nobler ambition ; that he had returned the sword to the scabbard ; that at his word torrents of blood had ceased to flow ; that he had restored tranquillity to Europe, and saved this country from the indescribable calamities of war.”¹

¹ *Bright's Speeches*, vol. i, p. 490.

V

THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

WAR is no respecter of persons, of nations, or of continents. It might I think be said with truth that no public event, not even the war with Russia, brought out more of the inward being of John Bright than the dreadful four years Civil War in America. From his point of view all war was an outrage on humanity. But this war had broken out in a land, and under a constitution, that were specially dear to him. It was, to use his own phrase, "a measureless calamity." As to its merits, its origin, its certain result, he never for a moment faltered. The one side was pledged to perpetuate Slavery, and even he, great speaker as he was, had hardly words strong enough to denounce this "insult to God and man."

"I believe," he said, "in the moral government of the world."¹ "I believe this great strife to have had its origin in an infamous conspiracy against the rights of human nature. It is the doctrine of devils and not of men."² They are not only slave buyers and sellers, but that which out of Pande-

¹ *Bright's Speeches*, vol. v. p. 277.

² *Ibid.* vol. v. p. 236.

monium itself was never before conceived, they are slave breeders for the slave market.”¹ “Their object is that a handful of white men shall lord it over many millions of blacks, made black by the very Hand that made *us* white. Their object is that they should have the power to breed negroes, to work negroes, to lash negroes, to chain negroes, to buy and sell negroes, to deny them the commonest ties of family, or to break their hearts by rending them at their pleasure, to close their mental eye to but a glimpse even of that knowledge which separates us from the brute—for in their laws it is criminal and penal to teach the negro to read—to seal from their hearts the Book of our religion, and to make chattels and things of men, women, and children.” “Is it,” he indignantly asks, “intended that on this audacious and infernal basis England’s new ally is to be built up? I want to know who they are who speak eagerly in favour of England becoming the ally and friend of this great conspiracy against human nature? This war is the penalty which inexorable justice exacts from America, north and south, for the enormous guilt of cherishing that frightful iniquity of Slavery for the last eighty years. The leaders of this revolt propose this monstrous thing—that over a territory forty times as large as England the blight and curse of Slavery shall be for ever perpetuated. I cannot believe, for my part, that such a fate will befall that fair land, stricken though now it is with the ravages

¹ *Bright’s Speeches*, vol. i. p. 239.

of war. I cannot believe that civilisation, in its journey with the sun, will sink into endless night in order to gratify the ambition of the leaders of this revolt, who seek to

‘Wade through slaughter to a throne,
And shut the gates of mercy on mankind.’

I have another and a far brighter vision before my gaze. It may be but a vision, but I will cherish it. I see one vast confederation stretching from the frozen North in unbroken line to the glowing South, and from the wild billows of the Atlantic westward to the calmer waters of the Pacific main; and I see one people, and one language, and one law, and one faith, and, over all that wide continent, the home of freedom and a refuge for the oppressed of every race and of every clime.”¹

There is one passage in one of these speeches which I venture to say no other speaker, as yet known to Englishmen, would ever have uttered in the House of Commons.

He has just said that “every year in the Slave States a hundred and fifty thousand children are born into the world, born with the badge and the doom of Slavery; born to the lash and to the chain and to the branding-iron, and to be taken from their families and carried they know not where.”

And then he turns to his fellow-members, and makes this personal appeal, so simple, so wonderful.

¹ *Bright's Speeches*, vol. i. p. 225.

“ I want to know whether you feel as I feel upon this question. When I can get down to my home from this House, I find half a dozen little children playing upon my hearth. How many members are there who can say with me, that the most innocent, the most pure, the most holy joy which in their past years they have felt, or in their future years they have hoped for, has not arisen from contact and association with our precious children ? Well, then, if that be so, if, when the hand of death takes one of those flowers from our dwelling, our heart is overwhelmed with sorrow and our household is covered with gloom ; what would it be if *our* children were brought up to this infernal system—a hundred and fifty thousand of them every year brought into the world in these Slave States, amongst these ‘ gentlemen,’ amongst this ‘ chivalry,’ amongst these men that we can make our friends ? A friend of mine told me that he himself saw a woman in North Carolina whose every child, ten in number, had been sold when they grew up to the age at which they would fetch a price to their master.” ¹

My friends, can we not in some measure enter into the joy of this great master of the language of the heart when, exactly four years after, almost to a day, it was granted to him to welcome in England William Lloyd Garrison, the champion and martyr of the Slave, and thus to sum up both the strife and the victory ? “ Then came the

¹ *Bright's Speeches*, vol. i. p. 279.

outbreak which had been so often foretold, so often menaced ; and the ground reeled under the nation during four years of agony, until at last, after the smoke of the battlefield had cleared away, the horrid shape which had cast its shadow over a whole continent had vanished and was gone for ever.”¹

¹ *Bright's Speeches*, vol. i. p. 290.

VI

THE TRIALS OF THE POOR

My kind friends, let us part in peace and with words of peace. Let us part from John Bright not as the denouncer of War or of Slavery abroad, but as the herald of Peace and of Liberty at home.

“I dwell among mine own people,” so he proudly said, in the language of Holy Writ, when explaining, when almost apologising for, his taking office under Mr. Gladstone in December 1868. With a heavy heart he left for the first time “his own people,” for his heart was with them,

“Their homely joys and destiny obscure,”

with what they were already, with what, in the fulness of time, they might become.

“I care,” he said, in 1858, “for the condition of the people among whom I live. Palaces, baronial castles, great halls, stately mansions do not make a nation. *The nation in every country dwells in the cottage.*” May I say, in all reverence, “a true saying, and worthy of all men to be received”? It is in the spirit of this truth that, ten years

later, speaking to the working men of Birmingham, he made that fine reference to the Atlantic cable, lately severed and still more recently re-united, with which I will conclude my long roll of quotations.

“The solemn question,” he says, “as to the future condition of a considerable portion of the labouring classes cannot be neglected. It must be known and remedied. It is a long way from Belgrave Square to Bethnal Green. It is not pleasant to contrast the palatial mansions of the rich and the dismal hovels of the poor. But I ask you, as I ask myself a thousand times, is it not possible that this mass of poverty and suffering may be reached and be raised, or taught to raise itself? What is there that man cannot do if he tries?”

“The other day he descended to the mysterious depths of the ocean, and with an iron hand sought, and found, and grasped, and brought up to the surface the lost cable, and with it made two worlds into one. I ask, are his conquests confined to the realms of Science? Is it not possible that another hand, not of iron but of Christian justice and kindness, may be let down to moral depths even deeper than the cable fathoms, to raise up from thence the sons and daughters of misery and the multitude who are ready to perish? This is the great problem which is now before us. It is one which is not for statesmen only, not for ministers of the Gospel only; it is one which every man in the nation should attempt to solve. The nation

is now in power; and if wisdom abide with power, the generation to follow may behold the glorious day of what we, in our time, with our best endeavours, can only hope to see the earliest dawn.”¹

¹ *Bright's Speeches*, vol. iii. p. 138.

VII

CONCLUSION

My friends, I have brought my task, not indeed to a completion, but to a close. It has not been an easy task. I have not sought to criticise either the statesman, or the orator, or the man. I have not troubled you with any attempt to penetrate the secret of that style which to myself appears, the more I study it, almost faultless, and by very few even approached. I have desired that you should judge him from his own words, inserting from myself only such narrative as might help you to see where and when and in what kind of atmosphere they were spoken. We began, you may remember, by quoting his own ideal, his own verdict on himself. "I believe in the moral government of the world. I have had, ever since I entered the political field, a deep and abiding faith in justice. In my humble way I endeavour always to speak publicly to my countrymen as a preacher of political righteousness and justice."

These words have been tested by the speaker's action during well-nigh forty years, in great variety of circumstance. We have seen how he bore him-

self in those great controversies which spring to memory as we just name them, Free Trade, Reform, the Russian War, the American War, the sorrows and trials of the working classes. If during this long hour you have been reminded of some words which thrilled and perhaps uplifted an earlier generation; if, whatever your own political bias, you feel that you have listened not only to an orator of the highest rank, but, more than this, to "a preacher of righteousness," then perhaps you will agree that this stout-hearted Englishman, who strove to break so many yokes and never "paltered with God" for place, or fame, or power, is, like his own hero, William Lloyd Garrison,

"On Fame's eternal bead-roll worthy to be filed."¹

¹ *Bright's Speeches*, vol. i. p. 292.

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CHARLES GEORGE GORDON

I

PRELIMINARY, WOOLWICH, CRIMEA

THIS is the 26th of January. Carry back your thoughts, my friends, just nineteen years. It was on this day in 1874 that the rumour reached England that Daniel Livingstone had died in Central Africa. That evening the Royal Geographical Society held their usual meeting, and the rumour was anxiously discussed by experts. On the 28th all doubt was at an end. On the evening of that day, his forty-first birthday, Charles Gordon "stole away from London" unnoticed, to grapple for the first time with that "open sore of the world" which Livingstone had done so much to reveal and to staunch. The two men had never met, but they were in many respects kindred souls. This day, January 26, the day on which Gordon fell at his post, is a day on which we may honour them both.

In 1886, just seven years ago, the first stone was laid of a new building near Bagshot. It is called the Gordon Boys' Home. Just inside the

hall, on a grey marble slab, engraved in letters of gold, is the following inscription :

This Home was Founded
In Memory of
Major-General

CHARLES GEORGE GORDON, C.B.,

A Man Simple and Heroic,
Loving Righteousness and Hating Iniquity.

Born to be a Soldier and a Ruler,

He gave his Heart

To the Young, the Poor, and the Outcast.

Accepting the Hardest Duties,

But refusing Wealth and Honours,

And counting his Life as Nothing

If by any means he might lessen the Miseries of Mankind,

In all Loneliness, Danger, and Perplexity,

“He endured as seeing Him who is Invisible.”

In China

By Inspiring a Disheartened Army

With his own Dauntless Resolution,

He Delivered the most Populous of Empires

From the Horrors of Civil War.

In the Soudan

He strove to Suppress Slavery,

And by his Just and Fatherly Rule

Won the Love of Helpless Multitudes.

In Khartoum

Called at a Memorable Crisis

To a task of Mercy beyond Human Strength,

For Eleven Months he held out Alone,

Drawing to Himself in the Beleaguered City

The Wonder and Reverence of the World,

And then Fell at his Post

“Faithful unto Death.”

Born at Woolwich, January 28, 1833.

Died at Khartoum, January 26, 1885.

It is of this great man, my friends, that I am hoping to give you some slight account. We have a long story before us, and we are compelled to hurry over each part of it.

Of his School days at Taunton there does not appear to be any record, but the later accounts of Woolwich suggest that, like Nelson at Norwich, he may have been something of what parents call a "little pickle" and uncles a "young scape-grace." Anyhow, he was hardly the model student. A friend says of him, "Certain it is that he and the Woolwich authorities did not get on well together, and Gordon was kept longer at the Academy than any cadet of his time."

Such anecdotes as have been preserved should, perhaps, be related by an Undergraduate rather than by a Master of a College, but they may at least amuse, if they scarcely edify.

"On one occasion," we are told, "he was rebuked for incompetence, and told that he would never make an officer; whereupon he tore the epaulets from his shoulders and flung them at his superior's feet."

Another of his escapades is thus described by his elder brother, Sir Henry. I hope it will not greatly shock a decorous audience like this.

"After he had been some time in the Academy and earned many good-conduct badges, an occasion arose when it became necessary to restrain the Cadets in leaving the dining-hall, the approach to which was by a narrow staircase. At the top of

this staircase stood the senior Corporal, with outstretched arms, facing the body of Cadets. This was too much for Charlie Gordon as he was always called by his numerous friends. Putting his head down, he butted with it, and, catching the officer in the pit of his stomach, not only sent him down the stairs but through the glass door beyond. The officer jumped up unhurt, and Charlie Gordon was placed in confinement and nearly dismissed. He was, however, allowed to remain, and the captain of cadet company, who afterwards became one of his greatest friends—not the senior Corporal—predicted that he would never make an officer.”

However keen our sympathy with the respectable man who served on this occasion as the butt, let us endeavour to preserve some sympathy also for the “butter”; for, in sober truth, that picture of the young Cadet, full of humour and self-confidence, running a tilt against decorous officialism, is something of an allegory and a prophecy. We shall find it reappearing often in his life, not least on the very eve of the sad January 26 of eight years ago.

We must pass lightly over the two years in the Crimea. The young Engineer was learning his trade in that stern school which, Napoleon tells us, turns out real soldiers—“Cold, hunger, and misery.”

His *Letters from the Crimea* are a lively photograph of that strange winter scene, which brings back to a few of us our own Undergraduate days.

Let me try to recall one of them, one day a letter came suddenly from the War Office telling us that any warm clothes for the invalids at Scutari would be prized by Miss Florence Nightingale. At once in every College a committee was extemporised of leading Undergraduates, charged to collect presents of flannel jackets, trousers, "blazers," rugs, greatcoats, furs, even seal-skins. In a few hours box after box was filled with these treasures, and all the boxes were kindly and gratuitously packed for us by the leading upholsterer in the town, his foreman simply remarking to me, in a tone which Gordon would have enjoyed, "A nice consignment for a lady; sir."

Gordon was not among the wounded at Scutari, but he was among the most exposed at the trenches.

A lively letter of June 21, 1855, tells us of sixteen hours and a half of continuous work on the eve of the assault of June 18, from 2.30 a.m. till 7 p.m., "rather a long spell"! Then, almost as soon as he returns to camp to get something to eat, an order awaits him to go down again at midnight to take part in the attack.

Again, two months later, he writes: "I have now been thirty-four times for twenty hours in the trenches—more than a month straight on end. It gets tedious after a time, but if anything is going on, one does not mind." How often in later lonely life he might have used the same bald words!

II

CHINA

WE must here make a sudden leap, from the Crimea to China, from Sebastopol to Soo-chow. I must try to compress into a few minutes what might well be the subject of two complete lectures.

You will have heard of the Taeping rebellion against the Chinese Government. It professed to be a religious crusade. It was really an audacious imposture, and became an organised butchery and devastation.

It is remarkable that twice within twenty years Gordon was called to confront two fierce military chiefs, one of whom declared himself a divine person, and the other professed to be divinely inspired.

From 1862 to 1864 he fought against the so-called "Heavenly King." In 1884 he fought, as we all know, against the Mahdi. The first enterprise brought him his fame; the second cost him his life and much more.

The "Heavenly King" was a village school-master in the south of China of the name of Hung. It is said that he was angry with the Chinese

Mandarins at not being allowed to pass certain examinations which would give him a dignified place among men of learning, something perhaps equivalent to our B.A. By way of vengeance for being "plucked," the Schoolmaster declared himself Divine. He soon gathered round him a body of believers, to whom he appeared as a prophet of vengeance and freedom, a champion of the poor and the oppressed, whose mission was to overthrow the Chinese Emperors and seize upon their throne. His cruelties, domestic and official, were beyond words. His favourite punishments were to flay his victims alive, or pound them to death. When at last, as the result of Gordon's victories, he saw that the game was up, he first hanged all his wives—and they were not few—and then he killed himself.

This detestable man had for years been devastating the country, capturing one great city after another, till at last he established himself in Nankin and threatened Shanghai. His chief officers were chosen from his kinsmen. They were called Wangs, or Kings. Some of them had curious nicknames, the yellow tiger, the one-eyed dog, cock eye, etc.

To save themselves from the atrocities of this wretch, the wealthy traders at Shanghai subscribed for the equipment of a foreign force which should act along with the imperial troops. Of this motley force Gordon took the command on March 25, 1863. He was just over thirty years of age.

To describe the military operations that followed,

the lecturer should be at least a Field-Marshal, and a good map of China should hang on the wall.

I can only single out a few points of interest, and that human, not military, interest. And first as to Gordon's motive in accepting so peculiar a command. It was an instinct of humanity. He saw that the cause of the rebels meant wholesale massacre and outrage. One sentence in a letter to his mother at the end of the war is enough to show the spirit in which he began it: "I know I shall leave China as poor as I entered it, but with the knowledge that through my weak instrumentality upwards of eighty to one hundred thousand lives have been spared. I want no further satisfaction than this. If you could only see the horrible cruelties the rebels have everywhere perpetrated!" Then as to the course adopted by the young commander. The first thing was to win the confidence of his troops. They were a strange set.

When the late Thomas Carlyle was once admitted to an interview with Queen Victoria, it is said that Her Majesty spoke in high terms of the Scotch people, and asked him what he thought of them, to which the old Scotchman replied, "They're just like other folk, ma'am, neither much better nor much worse." But Gordon's army, the "Ever Victorious Army" as they had christened themselves long before he joined them, were hardly "just like other folk." They certainly were not much better. You shall judge if they were much worse.

This is how they are described by Mr. Egmont Hake, from whom I constantly and gratefully quote. The merchants who "got up" the army "were pressed for time, and they laid hold of any and every one they could get—sailors without a ship, and deserters from the enemy, gaol-birds, pirates, wreckers and filibusters, outlaws, swash-bucklers, roughs, and tramps, of all nations, degrees, colours, and characters. They did not fight for country, for honour, for glory. They fought for money, plunder, loot, whatever they could get out of the scramble. One thing they had in their favour—they could fight, and they did fight like demons." One painful fact is recorded of them by one of themselves, which is indeed eloquent. In the month of July, when the corps was in Quinsan, out of a hundred and thirty or a hundred and forty officers, eleven died of delirium tremens.

To lick into shape such raw material, and to keep it in shape when once licked, was no easy task. The one thing that they seemed to value, plunder, was the one thing which Gordon was resolved they should not have. He gave them for the first time regular and liberal pay, and positively forbade loot. They tried a fall with him, and he threw them. The story of the mutiny ranks high among such narratives. I can but give the most meagre sketch of it.

"Any one who disobeys my orders shall be shot," so he had been forced to say. Then the men's blood was up. They sent him a round-robin.

Unless they got what they wanted, there would be trouble. Gordon summoned them to the barrack-yard. They came, growling and cursing and swearing. "Fall in!" was his command. They refused. "The name of the ringleader—quick!" he cried. "Out with it, or within an hour one man in every five of you shall be shot."

There was a loud and savage groan. One ruffian unluckily for himself groaned a little louder than his fellows, and instantly Gordon had him dragged from the ranks and shot. Then they collapsed. Cæsar could not have triumphed more decisively, and yet these were not the victories that Gordon loved. We shall find him soon winning other victories such as "Cæsar never knew."

Less than two years of constant fighting brought down the power of the rebels. Sieges well-planned, storming parties conducted with splendid nerve, extraordinary rapidity of movement, and the intelligent use of his steamers and artillery, soon led to the destruction of the enemy.

One tragic incident cannot be omitted even in such a sketch as this. It is known as the murder of the Wangs, or Kings, that is, the chief officers who were also kinsmen of the "Heavenly King." Gordon had allowed these Wangs to believe that, if they surrendered the large city of Soo-chow, their lives would be spared by the Chinese general, Ching, and the governor, Li. To his horror, he found that the Wangs had been executed. He came suddenly upon their bodies, "headless and frightfully

gashed." The effect on him was terrible. He burst into tears. He was beside himself. At one time he proposed to restore the city by force to the rebels and give General Ching and his troops a proper thrashing. Better counsels prevailed. General Ching wisely cleared out.

Gordon left China in 1864, as soon as his work was accomplished. He refused large offers of money from the Emperor, and he carefully disbanded his army, being by no means sure that they would not begin to loot and massacre as soon as his back was turned, and perhaps change sides.

III

GRAVESEND

1865-1871

WE now enter upon that stage of his life which, with one exception, the last of all, has perhaps fixed itself deepest in the imagination of his countrymen. Gravesend became for six years his official home. He called them his happiest years. To many men they would have been the dullest. But for Gordon they did what is done for many men by marriage. They brought out and fostered his tenderest sympathies. They trained him in offices of love. "Love is the badge of discipleship" became one of his favourite sayings. It was here and now that he learned the secret joy, hidden from so many, of condescending to men and things of low estate. During these years the soldier, the surveyor, the planner of forced marches, the leader of forlorn hopes, the queller of mutinies, the saviour of China—all this has passed. What you see is a quiet gentleman living wholly for others, and those mostly the youngest, the weakest, the most tempted, the most suffering, the least

religious. The Workhouse and the Infirmary were his constant haunts. Many of the dying sent for him in preference to the clergy. He was always ready to visit them, no matter in what weather or at what distance. But he would never take the chair at a religious meeting, or be in any way prominent. He was always willing to conduct services for the poor and address a Sweeps' tea-meeting; but all public speechifying, especially where complimentary speeches were made in his honour, he loathed.

Every one has heard of his "Kings," not the poor decapitated Wangs at Soq-chow, but his beloved boys, "especially those employed on the river or the sea. Many he rescued from the gutter, cleansed them and clothed them, and kept them for weeks in his home. He established evening-classes for them, reading to them and teaching them himself. One day a friend asked him why there were so many pins stuck into the map of the world over his mantel-piece. He was told that they marked the course of the boys on their voyages, that they were moved from point to point as his youngsters advanced, and that he prayed for them as they went day by day."

The boys, like other boys in the east of England, were mural artists in chalk, and chalked on the fence in large letters outside his house, "God bless the Kernel," and "C. G. G. is a jolly good feller," spelling the "kernel" as if he were the best part of a nut, and the "good feller" in a way inconceivable to a Fellow of Trinity.

Here is a pleasant glimpse of him at a Sunday school. "He would sit on a low form in a crowded room, teaching a group of urchins, on a summer afternoon, in a temperature sufficient to parboil any except the thickest skinned." The elder classes were, of course, left in the charge of the regular practitioners. To this distinguished irregular none but the youngest were entrusted. "Once only was he prevailed upon to address the whole school. It was done under difficulties. Only half the children could see him. He stood upon the rickety stairs, so as to be heard, if possible, by those in the upper as well as the lower room. There he opened his small Bible, and read as his text, 'Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.'"

The "indwelling God"—indwelling in every child of man because he is also a child of God—this great truth was the very centre of Gordon's religion. And now he was preaching it to children.

One of his hearers remembers, after twenty years, that far-away look in the speaker's eyes, as of one lost in wonder in the grandeur of the truth.

It is interesting to know that the little Bible from which the text was read out is now a valued possession of Queen Victoria at Windsor Castle. It was given to Her Majesty by Miss Gordon, and now lies open in an enamelled case with a bust of General Gordon on a pedestal beside it. Our Queen knows how to value a Christian hero.

It is not surprising that Gordon's goodness at

Gravesend seemed to those who daily saw it of an unusual kind. Two brief testimonies express what many felt. One, a minister of the Gospel, said, "I never knew a man who lived so near to God." Another, an officer in the army, said, "Gordon was the nearest approach to that One Man, Christ Jesus, of any man that ever lived."

At last the six happy years came to an end, and amid the touching regrets of his "kings" and his many poor friends at Gravesend, the good "kernel" left for some engineer work on the Danube in 1871. In November of the following year he met at Constantinople one of the ablest of Egyptian statesmen, Nubar Pasha. Nubar sounded him as to his willingness to serve for a time under Ismail, the Khedive of Egypt. Gordon assented, and, after obtaining leave from home, left England, as I have said above, on his forty-first birthday, January 28, 1874, to his new duties. He began by at once differing from the Khedive on an important detail. The Khedive pressed him to accept a salary of £10,000 a year. The new Pasha refused to accept more than £2000, the sum which he had been receiving at Galatz from his own Government.

IV

THE SOUDAN

1874-1879

THE Soudan is the immense region stretching from Egypt on the north to, roughly speaking, the Victoria and Albert Nyanzas on the south. How it was conquered by Egypt early in the Nineteenth century there is no time now to explain. Between 1850 and 1860 the Slave Trade had been frightfully developed. One man in particular, Zebehr, Gordon's evil genius, had thriven upon it. He had amassed vast wealth. He lived in princely state. His power fairly rivalled that of the Khedive himself. The Khedive of that time, Ismail, was desirous to strengthen his hold on the Soudan, and also to stand well with Europe as regards the Slave Trade. For this double purpose he had first employed our own great explorer, Sir Samuel Baker, and it was to replace Baker that in the year 1874 Gordon was summoned to Egypt. He was not, you will observe, till three years later, Governor-General of the Soudan. As he writes playfully to his sister, "Your brother's title is 'His Excellency General

Colonel Gordon'—an extraordinary mixture—'Governor-General of the Equator,' so no one can or ought to cross it without permission of His Excellency."

His centre of action was not yet Khartoum, but Gondokoro. His instructions were in the main twofold. He was to open up communications between Gondokoro and the two Nyanzas. He was also to use every effort to put down the Slave Trade. Even before he left Cairo he had a strong suspicion that this second part of his commission was a sham. The Egyptian politicians, he was convinced, wished to be credited with a desire to put down Slavery, but in their hearts they wished to maintain it for their profit.

If any one would come to feel at home with Gordon, but can lay his hand on only one book, let it be Dr. Birkbeck Hill's *Colonel Gordon in Central Africa*. If he can get a second, let it be Gordon's *Letters to his Sister*. If he can get a third, let it be Mr. Egmont Hake's *Story of Chinese Gordon*. The first book consists of journal-like letters, written evidently with no thought that they would ever be published. They are, indeed, a strange medley—devout musings, deep religious speculations, humane notices of poor negro women and children, political and social satire, engineering comments, adventures with elephants and hippopotamuses and mosquitoes, humorous portraits of character, native and European, Othello-like stories of

"moving accidents by flood and field,
Of hair-breadth 'scapes i' the imminent deadly breach,"

almost everything, in fact, except what we might call "descriptions of scenery." Of this last there is very little. Almost the only passage that I have noticed is in one of his most characteristic letters, January 5, 1878, where he is insisting on the difficulties of Missionary enterprise, and then adds, as some set off against these difficulties: "As for the countries, they are splendid. Take Albert Lake, a glorious amphitheatre of mountains with plenty of fine trees, picturesque little hamlets here and there with grain and everything men may need, flocks and cattle, and a splendid sheet of water stretching for miles, but a stillness that is dreadful. You feel yourself at the world's end. It is this more than anything which kills men off. I have had weeks on weeks of this life—waiting, waiting, waiting, for one thing or another; and often, oh, how often I have prayed to die quietly and be rid of this weariness."

Often he writes in a much lighter strain. Playfulness is part of the man, and a very large part. He is, if the phrase may be pardoned, fond of "chaff," good, not vulgar "chaff," directed against red tape in high places, often against social or religious hypocrisies, still more often against himself, Charles Gordon, that irritable, unconscionable, undiplomatic oddity, blurting out the wrong thing at the wrong moment, treading on some sensitive toe at its most sensitive corn, detecting, unluckily, some sham into which he has been inveigled, and

then, as he says, "feeling like a Gordon who has been humbugged."

All this part of the four hundred pages of the *Letters* is rich, racy reading. As we read, we see him and hear him. It amply confirms what one of his most intimate friends, Mr. Horace Waller, has written of him : " Witty, a great mimic, picking up ridiculous incidents and tales, he was rare company at all times."

Perhaps by this time you are saying to yourselves, " But what did Gordon *do* during his six years, first of divided and then of single rule ? " It is impossible to answer in a few sentences. The acts look bald enough without the local and personal colouring. Let me, however, quote a few telling sentences from Mr. Hake. " He had," says Hake, " to deal not only with worthless and often mutinous Governors of provinces, but with wild and desperate tribesmen as well. He had to give peace to a country quick with war ; to suppress slavery among a people to whom the trade in human flesh was life and honour and fortune ; to make an army out of perhaps the worst material ever seen ; to grow a flourishing trade and a fair revenue in the wildest anarchy in the world. The immensity of the undertaking, the countless odds to be faced ; the many pests"—here is a little local and personal colouring—" the many pests, the deadly climate, the horrible vermin, the ghastly itch, the nightly and daily alternation of overpowering heat and bitter cold, the environment of bestial savagery and ruth-

less fanaticism—all these combine to make the achievement unique in human history.”

If we try to sum up the actual achievement, it may be said that fortified posts were erected from Gondokoro to the Nyanzas ; that the gross tyranny of local Governors was largely put down ; that many thousands of wretched slaves were freed ; that the armed and disciplined bands of the slave-traders were dispersed or destroyed. But, beyond all this, the person of Gordon himself was a revelation to this dark country. They saw a man absolutely fearless, absolutely indifferent to money or comforts or enjoyments, just, tender, humane, simple. Of his singleness of heart there could be no manner of doubt. To serve God, to serve man, and to neglect himself was his one daily passion.

One of the few survivors of Khartoum, an Austrian mission priest, who saw on the palace stairs what he was told were the traces of Gordon's blood, has left us this latest testimony of the impression he created : “ The memory of Gordon, the heroic defender of Khartoum, is still held in respectful remembrance in the Soudan. His bravery, generosity, and voluntary self-sacrifice have won the admiration of his bitterest enemies. It is the common saying among Moslems, ‘ Had Gordon been one of us, he would have been a perfect man.’ ” But this is to anticipate. The dark hour has not yet struck.

At the end of 1879 Gordon left the Soudan. I pass by the details of his romantic visit to

Abyssinia, merely reminding you of one delicious story which I suppose every one has heard once.

This is how Gordon himself describes the King, Johannis. "He is rapidly growing mad. He cuts off the noses of those who take snuff, and the lips of those who smoke. Cruel to a degree, he does not, however, take life," in this like our own William the Conqueror. "He cuts off the feet and hands of people who offend him. He puts out their eyes by pouring hot tallow into their ears. I did 'worrit' him, I know, by remarks which were carried to him—such as, he would be better if he would not try and be God; that six feet of earth would hold me and would hold him; that he was not his own master; that God held his heart in His hand, and could turn it whither He would. All these things were told him."

So far Gordon himself; and now for the description, sketched by another, of the interview between the two potentates:

"The King received his prisoner," for so he regarded him, "sitting on his throne, a chair being placed for the prisoner considerably lower than the seat on which the King sat. The first thing the Pasha did was to seize his chair, place it alongside that of his Majesty, and sit down on it; the next, to inform him that he met him as an equal, and would only treat him as such. This somewhat disconcerted his sable Majesty, but on recovering himself he said, 'Do you know, Gordon Pasha, that I could kill you on the spot if I liked?' 'I am

perfectly well aware of it, your Majesty,' said the Pasha. 'Do so at once, if it is your royal pleasure. I am ready.' 'What,' said the other, 'ready to be killed?' 'Certainly,' replied the Pasha; 'I am always ready to die; and, so far from fearing your putting me to death, you would confer a favour on me by so doing; for you would be doing for me that which I am precluded by my religious scruples from doing for myself.' This completely staggered King John, who gasped out in despair, 'Then my power has no terrors for you.' 'None whatever,' was the Pasha's laconic reply. His Majesty instantly collapsed."

A few weeks afterwards, the Pasha had resigned his Pashalik, and was back in England. During his three years as Governor-General, 1887 to 1889, he had ridden, they tell us, eight thousand four hundred and ninety miles on camels and mules. His average day's journey on camels was thirty-two and a half miles; on the more sober mule, in the mountains of Rasselas, ten miles. No wonder his health was giving way. The doctor who saw him at Alexandria certified that he was suffering from anæmia and nervous exhaustion, and Gordon began to look forward to the ideal animal existence which his fancy had painted some years before: he would lie in bed till noon; he would only take short strolls; he would never go on a railway journey, and never accept an invitation to dinner. He would lunch on oysters.

Great men do not know, or at least foreknow,

themselves and their restless energy. In 1874, how well I remember it, Mr. Gladstone announced deliberately to Lord Granville his intention "to give up ere long, for a variety of reasons personal to myself, actual political service." He was then a young man of sixty-four. He is now a still younger man of eighty-three.

V

HIS RELIGIOUS LIFE

THE four next years in Gordon's life can only be glanced at. They show him in Ireland, at Mauritius, in Basuto-land, and then, during 1883, in Palestine. His stay there was a truly happy holiday, during which he wrote his *Reflections*, the most mystical of all his writings. All that I can now say of these four years is that they throw much light on the growth of his spiritual life. In this also, as in his military and political life, he is unique.

To my mind it is the isolation of his religious life, and the intensity which comes from isolation, which gives it its supreme and pathetic interest. If one may reverently single out three or four of its chief notes, I would point to his instinct for prayer ; his superb indifference to honours, danger, or death ; his profound belief, as we have before observed, in the indwelling of God, which made every soul, even of the most outcast slave in the Soudan, precious and dignified in His sight ; and latterly, perhaps above all, his absolute trust in God's protecting care, whether for life or in death.

Let me quote to you just four short passages—

1. As to prayer: "Praying," he says, "for the people whom I am about to meet gives me much strength; and it is wonderful how something seems always to have passed between us when I meet for the first time with a Chief for whom I have prayed." *Something seems to have passed between us.*

2. Again: "The grand distinctive mark of the Christian religion, which causes it to differ from any other religion, is the indwelling of God in man. . . . This is the great secret. Without us He is homeless. He needs us, and how much do we need Him!"

3. Again: "I took a poor old bag of bones into my camp a month ago, and have been feeding her up; but yesterday she was quietly taken off, and now knows all things. What a change from her misery! I suppose she filled her place in life as well as Queen Elizabeth."

4. Once more, in 1869, at Gravesend: "The 91st Psalm is a mountain of strength to all believers." Do you remember, my friends, its first verse, with its almost unequalled music? I like to think of it as Gordon's Psalm, even as the 46th, "God is our hope and strength" was the great Luther's. "Whoso dwelleth under the defence of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."

Writing to his sister from Mauritius in January 1882, Gordon says, in words that each of us might

be thankful to use with sincerity, “ I dwell more or less, *I wish it were more*, under the shadow of the Almighty.”

The time was coming when that word of the Psalmist, in which he so unfeignedly believed, was to be tried to the uttermost.

VI

THE END

WE are approaching the last scene of all, that ends "this strange eventful history." You do not forget it. January 1884 and 1885 are not yet very far distant. Gordon's predictions had come true. The Soudan was in rebellion. An obscure Dervish had given himself out as the Mahdi or Divine Prophet whom faithful Mussulmans were expecting. Armies were sent against him, and army after army was destroyed. In November 1883, eleven thousand men under the Englishman, Hicks Pasha, were annihilated almost to a man. It was resolved that Egypt should give up the Soudan. What remained was to rescue garrisons and other inhabitants who wished to come north. How was this difficult operation to be accomplished? Men's eyes turned to Gordon. He was on the point of starting for the Congo in the service of the King of the Belgians. He was summoned from Brussels by a telegraph from Lord Wolseley on Thursday, January 17, 1884. On Friday, January 18, he was introduced for a few minutes to the Cabinet, and was asked by Lord Granville, in Mr. Gladstone's

absence, if he would go to Khartoum and help to "evacuate the Soudan."

"I said yes. Lord Granville thanked me for going very nicely." At eight p.m. he left for Calais, Lord Wolseley having gone about to a few friends and collected two hundred sovereigns for him in a bag, as he had no money. Of these sovereigns he gave a hundred to his blind old secretary, Mahomet Bey, whom he met at Ismailia on his way to Cairo.

On January 26, 1884, the Khedive gave him his final instructions. On that day also he wrote to his sister: "I leave for the Soudan to-night. I feel quite happy, for I say, If God is with me, who can or will be hurtful to me? May He be glorified, the world and people of the Soudan be blessed, and may I be the dust under His feet."

You will forgive me if I pass over exactly one year, truly an *annus mirabilis*, a year of such heroism and resource as have rarely been combined; a year, too, of sublime faith and resignation. The picture which it unveils for us is that of a man trying to do his duty to his country and to the helpless multitudes committed to his charge, and then, in his loneliness and desolation, staying himself on his God. I will not attempt even to summarise that wonderful history. It is written in his journals and in his letters.

The last letter is dated December 14, 1884, and is well known. "This," he writes to his sister, "may be the last letter you will receive from me,

for we are on our last legs, owing to the delay of the expedition. However, God rules all; and as He will rule to His glory and our welfare, His will be done.

“P.S.—I am quite happy, thank God, and, like Lawrence, I have ‘tried to do my duty.’”

That, I say, was the 14th December. Let us look on to January 26 of the New Year. Every country has its days of humiliation. This 26th January is surely one of ours. Ancient Rome had her battle of the Allia and her Cannæ, Prussia has her Jena, Austria and Russia their Austerlitz, France has her Sedan. We have our Khartoum.

For the fall of Khartoum there are three main sources of information.

I. The official report of Colonel Kitchener, which is accepted by Gordon's elder brother and biographer, Sir Henry, and also by another most able biographer, Sir William Butler. Perhaps this may be regarded as, up to the year 1889, the received and accredited report.

II. But in 1891 appeared a second report. It forms part of a work by Major Wingate, who quotes a long extract from the journal of one Bordeini Bey, an eminent Khartoum merchant. This man had given up large stores of grain to Gordon for the supply of the garrison. In his journal he professes to have had interviews with him on several occasions up to Sunday the 25th January. He reports his conversation in great detail. He gives us the names of the four men who killed him, one of them

being the son of a man who had formerly been in Bordeini's service. He adds that he himself saw Gordon's head exposed in Omdurman. "It was fixed between the branches of a tree, and all who passed by threw stones at it."

III. Lastly, in 1892, was published *Ten Years' Captivity in the Mahdi's Camp*, 1882 to 1892. This is also a work of Major Wingate, taken from the original MSS of Father Joseph Ohrwalder, late priest of the Austrian mission station at Delen in Kordifan. This priest was the first European who escaped from the Soudan since 1885. Wingate fell in with him at Cairo, saw much of him, and persuaded him to write an account of his sufferings. It was written in German, roughly translated into English by a Syrian, and then rewritten in a narrative form by Wingate himself. This account confirms that of Bordeini, but it is not, like his, the statement of an eye-witness. Father Ohrwalder was not himself at Khartoum but at Delen when Khartoum fell.

I have not the means of forming a competent judgment as to the comparative accuracy of these three sets of statements—the Kitchener report, the Wingate report, the Ohrwalder report. I can only try to lay before you what seem to be a few facts.

It is Sunday, January 25, the day which to English Churchmen commemorates the conversion of St. Paul. Omdurman has fallen, probably about a week. The rebels have come close up to the south wall of the city, and cut off all supplies.

Famine has set in. Men are eating dogs, asses, skins of animals, and then gum and palm fibre. Many have died of hunger. Corpses fill the street. No one has even energy to bury them. Gordon has issued an order that any one who buries a corpse shall receive a reward of two dollars, but even this proves of no avail.

Bordeini records an interview with Gordon. "I asked to be allowed to see the Pasha, and was admitted to his presence." All the anxiety he had undergone had gradually turned his hair to a snowy white.¹ "What more can I say?" he said to Bordeini. "The people will no longer believe me. I have told them over and over again that help would be here, but it has never come. If this my last promise fails, I can do nothing more. Go and collect all the people you can on the lines and make a good stand. Now leave me to smoke these cigarettes."

At length the night of that sad Sunday came, and, "as I afterwards learnt," says Bordeini, "Gordon Pasha sat up writing till midnight, and then lay down to sleep. He awoke some time between two and three. The wild war-cries of the Arabs were close at hand. The moon, just past its first quarter, set at one o'clock. From that hour until the earliest dawn profound darkness wrapped the dying city. Then the attack was delivered, under a chosen leader. Swarms of

¹ This confirms what he had written to his sister on November 5: "I am very well, but very grey with the continued strain on my nerves."

Arabs had crept up silently, and poured over a gap that had been left in the parapet by the retreating river. Surprised, bewildered, and famine-stricken, the wretched soldiers made no resistance. The conquerors took possession of the town, and rushed to the palace.

“Meanwhile Gordon went up to the roof in his sleeping clothes, whence he had so long surveyed his foes and looked for the coming of the English flag. He at once divined that the rebels had entered the town, and for upwards of an hour he kept up a hot fire in the direction of the attack. . . . After a time he left the roof, went back to his bedroom, put on a white uniform, his sword (which he did not draw), and, carrying his revolver in his right hand, stepped out into the passage just at the head of the staircase.”

At this point our accounts differ. According to the statements which satisfied Colonel Kitchener, Gordon and a few attendants were walking towards the house of the Austrian Consul when some rebels appeared in an open place near the outer gate of the palace. Gordon was in front, leading the party. The rebels fired a volley, and Gordon was killed at once. The body was soon after beheaded. According to the other account, four Arabs, whose names are given, forced their way into the palace, rushed up the stairs, and made for Gordon's room. One of them met him beside the door of the divan. He was standing calm and dignified, his left hand resting on the hilt of his sword. The Arab, dashing for-

ward, and crying, "O cursed one, your hour is come," plunged his huge spear into his body. He fell, and the other three men rushed in and cut at the prostrate body with their swords. He made no resistance, and did not fire a shot with his revolver. His head was immediately cut off, and sent to the Mahdi at Omdurman; while his body was dragged downstairs and left exposed in the garden, where many Arabs came to plunge their spears into it.

Such was the scene on which the early sun looked down on this January 26, just eight years ago. Two days later, a steamer, carrying British soldiers under skilful and adventurous leaders, came within sight of Khartoum. No flag was flying on the palace roof. A native called out from the bank that Khartoum had fallen, and that General Gordon had been killed. It was a little before noon, on his fifty-second birthday.

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DR. ARNOLD AND OTHER CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS

THE subject on which I have been called to address you is "Some Aspects of Christian Work in the Nineteenth Century." One aspect of such work will to-day engage our thoughts. It is the efforts of good men to bring not only healthy but distinctly Christian influences to bear on our great Public Schools.

It cannot, I fear, be questioned that during, we will say, the Eighteenth century and, roughly speaking, the first quarter of the Nineteenth, such distinctly Christian efforts were conspicuous by their absence. There were, indeed, many earnest Christian schoolmasters between 1700 and the time of Arnold; but the conception of school life as a training in Christ both for boys and masters, and the ambition of serving Christ as part of a school-boy's school ideal—these things were either no longer or not yet.

The evidence for this conclusion is, to my mind, as irresistible as it is painful. I can but touch upon it. I find one admirable man, with special opportunities of judging, writing in 1844, "The tone of young men at the University"—and he

went to Balliol about 1825—"the tone of young men, whether they came from Winchester, Eton, Rugby, Harrow, or wherever else, was universally irreligious."

I find another saying, "The religious teaching in my schooldays was not a strong point either in or outside our Chapel." Another, "It cannot be said that our religious training was sufficiently attended to. All that my tutor did for me at Confirmation was to ask whether I could say the Catechism, to which I said 'Yes.' In no case was Confirmation followed up by the Holy Communion; in short, as regards the school, it was, I fear, a thing unknown." This was in 1824. Yet again another witness, "At my school we were literally without religious guidance"; and yet another, "I received no religious instruction whatever of any kind"; and yet another, "In my day not only no boys took the Lord's Supper, but no one dreamed of it."

We know, my friends, that charges of this kind would not be made against the great Schools now. Can we, then, fairly "locate" the beginning of a change, and can we connect the change with one or more names? I think we can.

It was in the year 1827, "the year that classic Canning died," and that saw the publication of Keble's *Christian Year*, that Thomas Arnold was elected Head Master of Rugby. He was thirty-two years of age. His friends expected much from him, and perhaps feared something. One of the "prophecies" which "went before" upon him was

from his lifelong friend, Edward Hawkins, Provost of Oriel, who predicted that "if Mr. Arnold were elected, he would change the face of education all through the Public Schools of England."

Such a testimonial, if now given to a candidate, might probably blast all his hopes. But seventy years ago the twelve noblemen and gentlemen of Warwickshire were, it would seem, men of stout heart, and prepared to stomach even a Luther. Arnold was elected in December 1827, and met his boys in the following August.

What, then, was the "aspect of Christian work" which presented itself to his eager gaze? What was his own conception of it? Had he before him any clearly cut design? Could he have said—what Edward Thring said, when asked whether the structural and other ideas of Uppingham had grown upon him as he advanced in his work,—“No. Among my papers I can show you the sketch, almost in detail, of everything I proposed to do, and which you now see here, just as I made it in the very first years of my mastership”?

I doubt if Arnold, on leaving his private tutorship at Laleham, had any such working model in his study or in his brain. At the same time, he had doubtless a clear conviction that there was a real Christian work to be done at Rugby, and that he, with God's help, could do it. Writing to an intimate friend just before the election, he says, "If I do get it, I feel as if I could set to work very heartily, and, with God's blessing, I should like to try whether

my notions of Christian education are really impracticable; whether our system of Public Schools has not in it some noble elements which, under the blessing of the Spirit of all holiness and wisdom, might produce fruit even to life eternal."

And yet again, some two months after the election, "With regard to reforms at Rugby, give me credit, I must beg of you, for a most sincere desire to make it a place of Christian education. At the same time, my object will be, if possible, to form Christian men; for Christian boys I can scarcely hope to make."

Now, my friends, so far as I can judge, this is a new voice in the English world. The hour has come, and a man has arisen who is equal to the demand of the hour.

As to his first "throw off," there is but little evidence. I do not gather, nor is it at all likely, that he made any speech or issued any kind of manifesto on first taking office. Even his earliest published sermons do not cover just this interval of space. According to Stanley, during his first half-year he confined himself to delivering short addresses, of about five minutes' length, to the boys of his own house. But from the second half-year he began to preach frequently; and from the autumn of 1831, when he took the Chaplaincy, he preached almost every Sunday to the end of his life, that is, for thirteen years.

It is of course impossible in a lecture like this to give any adequate account of these sermons,

once so famous and so potent for good. If we were to call witnesses, they would be the boys who heard them and the readers who have loved them—the boys as painted in *Tom Brown*, and the readers some of whom have become in their turn preachers. Hastily but very carefully written, they are not so much writing as talk—grave, very grave talk, heart to heart, soul to soul ; talk from a grown-up man to boys of various ages, to whom he is affectionately drawn not only by his office but by “ all that is within him,” and “ for whose everlasting good, as Christian men,” he feels profoundly responsible to God.

Such talk from a schoolmaster to schoolboys had not, to the best of my knowledge, been heard for centuries. For the last fifty years it has been heard, with more or less of likeness, and of course with very different degrees of power, in almost every boarding-school all over England.

Many new schools have come into being ; some absolutely new, like Wellington, Haileybury, Clifton, Fettes, the Leys, Cheltenham ; others virtually re-founded, like Sherborne, Sedbergh, Marlborough, Uppingham. Week by week a succession of Head Masters, many of them once Rugby boys or Rugby Assistant Masters, have striven hard to hold up before schoolboys not only lessons of honour and manliness and good-fellowship, but lessons directly Christian ; faith in Christ, brotherhood in Christ, consecration to Christ, forgiveness for Christ’s sake, prayer in Christ’s Name, Missions at home and

abroad in Christ's Name, reverence for the poor in Christ's Name, love of Christ's Church, of Christ's Sacraments, above all, of Christ's Person.

This is, surely, one "aspect of Christian work." Many grateful testimonies have been borne to the part played in it by one most faithful and true Pastor. One of these, almost too sacred to quote publicly, is in the well-known poem of his brilliant son, "Rugby Chapel." It gives, surely, and only as poets can give, the very ideal of a Christian teacher :

"But thou wouldst not *alone*
Be saved, my father ! *alone*
Conquer and come to thy goal,
Leaving the rest in the wild.
We were weary, and we
Fearful, and we, in our march,
Fain to droop down and to die.
Still thou turnedst, and still
Beckonedst the trembler, and still
Gavest the weary thy hand,
Cheerful, and helpful, and firm.

.
Therefore to thee it was given
Many to save with thyself ;
And, at the end of thy day,
O faithful shepherd ! to come,
Bringing thy sheep in thy hand."

There are those who have questioned both the depth and the extent of Arnold's influence. A few years ago a brilliant and not unkindly writer startled many of his readers with the following sentence : "Dr. Arnold unquestionably made a

deep impression on those boys who were brought into close communication with himself, but I cannot find that his influence over the school survived longer than that of any subsequent Head Master ; while upon other schools, so far as I have been able to ascertain, he produced—I believe it is not too much to say—no effect whatever.”

I hope I am not quite unable to enjoy a daring paradox or a delicate stroke of irony, but I must confess that this last clause produces on me much the same effect as the famous discovery years ago that “ Shakespeare is a vastly overrated man.”

“ No effect whatever on other schools ! ”

We shall hear shortly the testimony of Moberly as to Winchester—Moberly, who differed so widely from Arnold as a churchman and a theologian. But what would be the witness of Prince Lee, who went from Rugby to Birmingham, after being from 1830 to 1838 an assistant of Arnold ; of Cotton and Bradley, who both went from Rugby to re-found and re-inspire Marlborough ; of Charles Evans, Percival, and Wilson, who all went from Rugby to found Clifton ; of Benson, who went from Birmingham and Rugby to found Wellington ; of Arthur Butler, who went from Rugby to found Haileybury ; of Bradby, Rugbeian of Rugbeians, and of James Robertson, who succeeded Butler there ; of Jex-Blake, who went from Rugby to preside over Cheltenham, and then returned to his old school bent on renewing and deepening its old Arnoldian traditions ?

No, paradox is paradox, and truth is truth. The prophecy of Provost Hawkins has been more than fulfilled. The young man who was selected by the Rugby Trustees at the end of 1827 *has*, under God, and by his quickening influence on minds very different both from his own and from one another, “changed the face of education all through the Public Schools of England.”

But here let us guard against an obvious error. It is not of course my object to claim for Arnold that he alone originated efforts for Christianising life and work at schools ; or that the lines on which he worked were the only true lines ; or that but for him nothing would have been done.

Let us pass for a few moments from Rugby to Winchester, not forgetting that Arnold himself was a loyal son of that oldest of all old foundations. Winchester has always had both her Cathedral and her school Chapel, long of course before the Reformation. Her traditions are not religious only but ecclesiastical. More than two hundred years ago, in the bad times of Charles II., we find the saintly Ken thus addressing his young imaginary school-fellow : “ O Philotheus, you cannot enough thank God for the order of the place you live in, where there is so much care taken to make you a good Christian as well as a good scholar ; where you go frequently to prayers every day in the Chapel and in the school, so that you are in a manner brought up in a perpetuity of prayer.”

This was the tradition. How its light had

gradually waned, I do not know ; but in 1835, seven years after Arnold went to Rugby, there were at least two very earnest and very able men who strove hard to revive it—Bishop Moberly, the Head Master, and Bishop Charles Wordsworth, the Lower Master. They had been simultaneously appointed in 1835:

In Wordsworth's *Annals of my Life* there are some deeply interesting particulars as to how he went to work ; how he strove to make prayer in the dormitories a regular practice, and how on one memorable evening, Easter Eve, 1838, he got a promise from the Prefects to enforce silence. And this, on Wordsworth's part, was, so to speak, original. Moberly, it is true, says, " I owe more to a few casual remarks of Arnold than to any advice or example of any other person " ; but Wordsworth tells us explicitly that he " knew nothing of the great work which Arnold had been doing for ten years. He had never seen or even heard of his sermons preached at Rugby."

The work of the two friends at Winchester was mainly on what may be called " High Church " lines. Wordsworth himself writes : " The truth is, there was (in those years) a general awakening, which in many instances, as with us at Winchester, partook decidedly of a Church character, such as Arnold's teaching and example, however excellent in their way, had little or no tendency to create." This, I may say, is fully borne out by his own work, *Christian Boyhood at a Public School*, which

consists of over fifty discourses delivered between 1842 and 1846.

During most of the time that Charles Wordsworth was at Winchester, his brother Christopher, afterwards Bishop of Lincoln, was working in much the same spirit at Harrow. He was appointed Head Master in 1836, in succession to Archbishop Longley. One of his first acts, and it was a brave "venture of faith" considering the small number of boys then in the school, was to build for the first time a School Chapel. This Chapel, together with his volume of school sermons and his work entitled *Theophilus Anglicanus*, are the chief visible memorials of his religious influence as a Schoolmaster. Himself a saintly man, of rare beauty of character, he came at an unpropitious time. He was known as a High Churchman, and in the years between the publication of *Tract XC.*, 1841 and 1845, when Newman joined the Church of Rome, a High Churchman was a "suspect."

Dr. Wordsworth left Harrow at the end of 1844, and was succeeded by Dr. Vaughan, who, for just fifteen years at Harrow, and afterwards for forty-three years, as Vicar of Doncaster, Master of the Temple, and Dean of Llandaff, was destined to leave a deep-set mark on the spiritual life of his time. He was known, when he came to Harrow at the age of twenty-eight, as a brilliant Cambridge scholar, as the son of that "Vaughan of Leicester" who was for many years an enlightened leader in the Evangelical party, and above all as a favourite

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pupil of Arnold. The two Head Masters were singularly alike each other, in look, in voice, in manner, in range of learning, in variety of interests, in theological bias. But there can be no doubt that Vaughan brought to the service of Harrow much of the Christian spirit of Arnold, besides those keenly tempered gifts which were peculiarly his own. He was far indeed from being a copyist of any man. He was even jealous of its being supposed that life at Harrow was in any way an imitation of life at Rugby. But writing at the close of his first year at Harrow, 1845, in the preface to his first volume of sermons, he could not but own his debt to his great master so lately and so suddenly called away. "It will," he says, "be seen at once how much help I have derived, in the subjects of some, and the general tone of all, from those addressed by Dr. Arnold to a like congregation. I find more and more how widely he has occupied this ground."

I must not attempt to describe the "Christian work" which Dr. Vaughan attempted and carried through during his fifteen years at Harrow. My judgment of it, even if true, would certainly not be impartial. He has laid me and hundreds of other pupils under such spiritual obligations as make impartiality a heartless phrase. But I can say, without reserve, that at no time in my life have I been so conscious of living in a directly Christian atmosphere, with Christian ideals of duty habitually set up for reverence, as during the happy

years when he presided over Harrow. The main cause was, no doubt, his impressive personality ; his remarkable combination of deep devoutness with wit, penetration, and delicate sympathy ; his quiet tenacity of purpose, and an inborn almost humorous sense of masterfulness which no softness of manner could disguise. But doubtless the spell of this personality was confirmed week by week by his admirable sermons, so keen in their insight, so tender in their touch, so winning in their expression, so rich in the fulness of Christ.

It is easy to overrate, but it is quite as easy to underrate, the lasting power of sermons. All I can say is, and many still living would gratefully concur, that these sermons of our dear master, as summed up in his *Memorials of Harrow Sundays*, have been to hundreds of us the day-star of our lives.

No sketch, however slight, of Christian work at Public Schools can omit the thirty-four years of Edward Thring at Uppingham. Beyond all doubt he was a most original man. His ideas, his plans, his methods, his manner of speech, his whole bearing towards Trustees and Commissioners, boys and masters, were his own. Consciously, he borrowed nothing. He framed his schemes early in life, and pushed them forward with the energy of a Cæsar.

From first to last he was haunted by one fruitful thought : no boy at school was fairly dealt with unless his surroundings were favourable to his

health, physical, mental, and moral. The school-rooms must be large, light, cheery, well furnished with good desks, seats, maps, and the like. The large room in which they met must be stately. The Chapel must be noble, awe-inspiring. In the long run, what he often humorously called the "almighty wall" must tell upon the feelings, the imaginations, the memories. By the "almighty wall" I understand him to have meant all that is structural and material. They are not the highest things in education; but unless they are high, the highest cannot be attained. Sordid surroundings, overcrowded boarding-houses, black, forbidding, low, ill-lighted rooms, anything suggestive of the barracks or the workhouse—these are an insult to a liberal education.

He himself once explained very clearly to his Trustees, after they had had twenty-two years of him, without perhaps even then understanding him, what had been his aims since he first entered their service. "The two facts," he said, "on which the present school has been built up are very simple and easily stated. They are these two truths—*Firstly*, the necessity in a true school that every boy, be he clever or stupid, must have proper individual attention paid to him. If he has not, the boy who has not, so far as he is neglected, is not at school.

"*Secondly*, that proper machinery for work, proper tools, of all sorts, are at least as necessary in making a boy take a given shape, as in making

a deal box. Out of these two axioms," he continues, "the present school of Uppingham has grown."

Had he desired to formulate the chief *moral* aim of his school, he might have said "true work"—no shams, no half and half, no shirking, but good, true work by every boy, because every boy can do something well; at all events, he can do his best.

All that has been said so far might have been said of *any* original, clear-sighted, conscientious man. But Thring was much more than this. He was also a humble, brave, fervid Christian. His faithful pupil and biographer, Mr. Parkin, is certainly not going one whit beyond the truth when he says "that no one can gauge Edward Thring's work and character unless he understands the supreme influence on his life of the belief, nay, the passionate conviction, that education was in a special sense a work for God. The feeling, indeed, that in training young lives he was doing a special and direct work for God dominated his own life and all his views of school life. It gave him his starting-point for practical work."

Yes, my friends, of the many holy men and women who, in this fast fleeting century have done good "Christian work" for God, a high place must always be accorded—little as he would have cared for any praise but the love of his old pupils—to the devotion, the faith, the patience, the trust, the dauntless self-consecration of Edward Thring.

Five years after the refounding of Uppingham another Founder appeared on the scene. In the spring of 1858 Edward White Benson was appointed the first Master of Wellington College. Few men could be less like one another either in appearance or in character than Benson and Thring. Yet in reading what is written of the one Founder one is often reminded of the other ; for each was essentially original, creative, constructive, autocratic, "fervent in spirit," rapid in temper and in action.

The following sentences by a shrewd friend of Benson have quite an Uppingham ring. "He at once impressed me with confidence and interest. The masters were made to feel from the first that they were helping to work out a new plan. Instinctively we saw that there were grand possibilities in the College as it grew under his hand. . . . There was very little experience among the masters, but much enthusiasm. He taught us one great lesson—to be self-sacrificing for the College, to be ready to give, and to enjoy giving, time, money, thought, and whatever ability we possessed, to its development on every side, to the building and decoration of the Chapel, to the organisation of the games and of the work in school."

As to the directly Christian aspect of his work, it is perhaps enough to remember that he became the Chancellor of Lincoln, the Bishop of Truro, and the Archbishop of Canterbury. "There was nothing in his whole Wellington life," so his son tells us, "in which my father took such constant

delight as the Chapel and the Chapel service." He preached regularly, so we learn from his widow, every Sunday morning. He used to think of the sermon during the week, but he seldom put pen to paper till the first service was over, about ten o'clock. And he had to preach the sermon at the twelve o'clock service.

Those who know his *Sermons on Boy-Life*, and how packed they are with thought as well as feeling, may be surprised at this seeming hurry ; but when the heart of an able man is full, it becomes "the pen of a ready writer." It was the same with the simple, massive talk of Arnold and the finished, tender appeal of Vaughan. Both were produced at what might seem to some "fever heat," but there was no other sign of fever in them.

There is yet another piece of constructive and eminently Christian work which I can but touch. I refer to the almost heroic achievement of the late Canon Woodard. It is right to own that I have no first-hand knowledge of himself or his system. But there may be some here who, like myself, may be not only gratified but even startled to learn how vast a bulk of Christian work in the cause of education stands credited to his name. His working years were, roughly speaking, from 1851 to 1880, much the same period as that of Thring. He conceived the grand design of founding, by means of a society, all over England three distinct grades of schools—for the gentry, the upper middle class, and the poorer classes. These schools were

avowedly on High Church lines, "in the doctrines and principles of the Church now established, and under the direction of clergymen and laymen in communion with the Church."

Already upwards of half a million has been expended on this group of schools. From the short account of the Founder in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, I gather that there are at least nine of them for boys, and at least three for girls. Many thousands of boys and girls must already have been trained there. A great work for forty years! That great preacher and thinker, the late Professor James Mozley, has devoted to these schools three of his most thoughtful sermons.

"And what shall we more say? For the time would fail me to tell of" other Christian foundations; of the High Church College at Radley, founded by Sewell; of the Wesleyan, "The Leys," founded by Dr. Moulton, here at our very gates; of the Evangelical work at Liverpool College by Conybeare, Dean Howson, and Canon George Butler; or again at Repton by that admirable man Stewart Pears, whom I remember in my boyhood as an Assistant Master at Harrow. Still less is there time to enter upon another great parallel movement, the widespread establishment of schools for Girls, like that founded by Miss Buss in North London, which only a few months since held its solemn Jubilee in St. Paul's Cathedral, the roll of benefactors being read out by the Bishop of London, and the sermon preached by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

My friends, I have told you a long story, and yet you must see that our chief difficulty has been to suppress.

The last three-quarters of our century must always surely stand out well in the records of Christian work at our Public Schools. The evidence is complete that the effort not only to improve their intellectual culture but to penetrate their life with the true Christian spirit has, at least since the time of Arnold, been earnest and continuous.

Is there any reason to fear that the tide so long flowing is beginning to ebb? One fact is certain, that the proportion of Clergy to Laymen among the Masters is nothing like what it was even twenty years ago. It is more and more difficult—I speak as a Governor of five of our chief schools, and as one intimately acquainted with many others—to secure as a Head Master a man who is at once in Holy Orders and also in the very front ranks of University distinction. I hold it to be certain that during the coming century the chief posts at the Public Schools will be largely held by Laymen. Nor would this prospect have any terrors for me if only it be understood by the coming generations, as it has been by our own, that one of the chief qualifications for a Head Master is to care for the spiritual growth of his boys, and if, in consequence of this belief, it be one of his recognised duties to speak to them constantly, if not weekly, from the Chapel pulpit. This has been done already by Laymen from not a few pulpits, and with the happiest

results. It is by extending this system far more widely, and, if necessary, removing any legal obstacles, that I seem to see the best guarantee for the maintenance of what has been, under God, one of the chief religious forces of our time. A Head Master, whether lay or clerical, is a Pastor, or he is nothing. That lesson at least has been taught us by one "aspect of Christian work" in the reign of Queen Victoria.

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THOMAS ERSKINE OF LINLATHEN

I

INTRODUCTION, BIRTH, FRIENDS, LINEAGE

WHEN you did me the honour, some five months ago, to ask me to deliver your Commemoration Address, I accepted it, not indeed "with a light heart," far from it, but with something of friendly temerity. I made up my mind to be rash. I knew that there was no subject on which I felt any call or any clear wish to submit my thoughts to others, and that for a subject requiring real learning, in theology, or history, or philosophy, I lacked the due equipment. Accordingly, it has proved more than difficult to find a theme which could be thought in any way worthy of your presence to-day. The subject which, after much anxiety and many searchings of heart, I have at last ventured to choose, is one which has at least this merit, that it has long been very near to my heart. The lives of Christian men and women of very different schools have been, ever since boyhood, one of my favourite pursuits. If I must not say favourite studies, it is because the pursuit has been too superficial

to deserve so dignified a name. One life after another has been dipped into, and read, and loved, and admired, and often wondered at ; and the thought aroused on each occasion has at last settled into something of a creed—that there exists, not in theological dogma alone, or chiefly, but in the heart of the human family at large, a true “ communion of saints,” which, partly understood, and partly felt, and partly prayed for, is perhaps the purest treasure with which the Lord Jesus has endowed His Church.

Permit me, then, this afternoon to offer you most respectfully a few touches in the portraiture of one very holy man—a man, too, “ greatly beloved ”—who has long seemed to me to represent the Christian type in a more attractive form than almost any man or woman of the last hundred years. He is known to most of you by name, to many of you, I feel sure, far more intimately than to myself. Those who know and love him best will make the most indulgent allowance for the slightness of my sketch, for many startling and even glaring omissions, and doubtless for some false or distorted strokes for which not my will but my second-hand knowledge is responsible.

Thomas Erskine of Linlathen can never, I imagine, be a stranger at Westminster College. If you had pictures of English and Scotch worthies of the last century, you would hardly grudge him a place on your walls. I shall hope, before I close, to show you, at least in part, why it is that he

has long been one of my spiritual heroes. Meanwhile, if it be in any way true that a man is "known from his friends," let me just repeat a very few names of the men and women who gave their hearts, and, in no slight degree, their intellects also, to this most holy, most winning, and most highly gifted man. As I slowly read them, mark and note in your minds the variety, the contrasts, the antagonisms.

On that long bead-roll I find inscribed Dr. Chalmers, and John M'Leod Campbell of Row, and Madame de Broglie, daughter of Madame de Staël, and Edward Irving, and the Chevalier Bunsen, and John Mackenzie, and Thomas Carlyle, and Frederick Denison Maurice, and Merle d'Aubigné of Geneva, and Alexandre Vinet of Lausanne, and Charles Kingsley, and Alexander Scott, and Lady Elgin, and Adolphe Monod of Paris, and Bishop Ewing, and Arthur Stanley, and Norman Macleod, and William Hanna, and Benjamin Jowett, and Mrs. Russell Gurney, and Miss Wedgewood, and Principal Shairp. It would be easy to enlarge the list, but it is perhaps too long already. For my purpose, however, it has a meaning. I desire to recall something of what Erskine was in himself by hinting, rather than showing, what he was to his friends. This will relieve me of a task which I could not face, the task of criticism. I shall criticise neither his acts nor his books, nor his doctrines, nor, save in the most general way, his character. My hope is to place before you by

slow degrees, touch after touch, perhaps daub after daub, a picture which, even in unskilled hands, can scarcely lack beauty. You will forgive me if, at the end, I take my leave of you with only one definite suggestion: this man, Thomas Erskine, who died thirty-six years ago, is worth studying and worth knowing.

He was born in October 1788, and died in March 1870.

It has been said, I think by a Scotchman, that while the best posts in the Civil Service of India must, of course, be given by competitive examination, yet a candidate ought to get high marks for a good father.

Thomas Erskine was happy in his ancestry. As Principal Shairp puts it, in his loving and yet searching *Reminiscences*, "he was sprung from a far-descended and gracious race, and among these, his kindred, he passed a childhood and youth sheltered from those early shocks and jars which probably lie at the root of much of the unkindness and asperity there is in the world. Equally on his father's and his mother's side he came from what the late biographer of Walter Scott used to call, with so much satisfaction, a fine old Scottish family."

One earlier member of that family I must ask leave just to introduce to you before we pass on. It is a venerable, if not quite a majestic figure. I mean the once famous Dr. John Erskine, who was born about 1720.

“For fifty years,” writes Dr. Hanna, “he was the centre of a large religious circle, having among his correspondents Bishops Warburton and Hurd in England, Jonathan Edwards and Dr. Cotton Mather in America, and many distinguished divines of the Continent.” He was theologically the opponent, and in some sense the rival, but socially the friend of the more renowned Dr. Robertson. It fell to him to preach at the funeral of his illustrious colleague, and his sermon was thought so manly, so chivalrous, and so true, that Dugald Stewart said of it, “it would be difficult to say whether it reflected greater honour on the character of the writer or of him whom it commemorates.”

But a greater than either Dugald Stewart or Dr. Hanna has given us a picture of good Dr. Erskine which I shall be more than pardoned for unveiling for a moment. Here, if anywhere south of Edinburgh, a voice from *Guy Mannering* will be hailed and “made room for.” The scene is a house in the Old Town of the Maiden City. The day is Sunday. A voice we all know says to Colonel Mannering, “And now, sir, if you please, we shall go to the Greyfriars Church to hear our historian of Scotland, of the Continent, and of America.”

They were disappointed. Dr. Robertson did not preach that morning. “Never mind,” said the counsellor—that is of course the shrewd and jovial Mr. Pleydell—“have a moment’s patience, and we shall do very well.”

The colleague of Dr. Robertson ascended the

pulpit. His external appearance was not prepossessing. A remarkably fair complexion was strangely contrasted with a black wig without a grain of powder. No gown, not even that of Geneva, a tumbled band, and a gesture which seemed scarce voluntary, were the first things which struck a stranger.

"The preacher seems a very ungainly person," whispered Mannering to his friend.

"Never fear, he's the son of an excellent Scottish lawyer"—that is, Professor John Erskine, author of *The Institutes*—"he'll show blood, I'll warrant him."

The learned counsellor predicted truly. A lecture fraught with new, striking, and entertaining views of Scripture history; a sermon in which the Calvinism of the Kirk of Scotland was ably supported, yet made the basis of a sound system of practical morals. . . . It was not read. A scrap of paper, containing the heads of the discourse, was occasionally referred to, and the enunciation, which at first seemed imperfect and embarrassed, became, as the preacher warmed in his progress, animated and distinct; and although the discourse could not be quoted as a correct specimen of pulpit eloquence, yet Mannering had seldom heard so much learning, metaphysical acuteness, and energy of argument, brought into the service of Christianity. "Such," he said, going out of the church, "must have been the preachers to whose unfearing minds and acute, though sometimes rudely exercised, talents, we owe the Reformation."

“And yet,” said Pleydell, “that reverend gentleman, whom I love for his father’s sake and his own, has nothing of the souring or pharisaical pride which has been imputed to some of the early fathers of the Calvinistic Kirk of Scotland. His colleague and he differ, and head different parties in the Kirk, but without for a moment losing personal regard or respect for each other.”

It can never be “a far cry,” least of all perhaps in this Hall, from the Tweed to the Cam. A breath from dear Sir Walter is, to quote a phrase in Plato’s *Republic*, like “a gale from salubrious lands.” If, however, I am challenged to prove that this long quotation is relevant enough to appease even a Scottish thirst for logic, let me, as a kinsman of Francis Galton, be allowed to remind you, in the name of Heredity, that this Dr. John Erskine was the half-brother of David Erskine, a Writer to the Signet in Edinburgh, who purchased the estate of Linlathen, near Dundee, now inseparably linked with the name of his son. This David Erskine, by his marriage in 1781 with Ann Graham, became the father of seven children, of whom Thomas, fifth in order, was the latest survivor.

II

ESSENCE OF HIS CHARACTER. TESTIMONIES TO HIM

As I have no intention of arranging in order the events of a life which was singularly uneventful, it is time to ask wherein its acknowledged beauty consisted. What chiefly was it which made this man so fascinating a host or so delightful a companion to minds so different from his own and from one another? Why did Arthur Stanley say that "to be with him was to have one's conversation in heaven"? What did Bishop Ewing mean when he wrote of him: "I have just come from being ten days with Mr. Erskine. It is always a great gain to be with him. I learn more from his conversations than from all the books I read. His looks and life of love are better than a thousand homilies." And again, writing to him much earlier than this: "I owe you more, dear sir, than to any man alive. I owe you belief in God, in God as *my* and *our* true Friend and Father"?

What, I ask again, was the spiritual spell which this Apostolic layman so long threw over many of the best Christians, lay and clerical, of two generations?

To answer this question is not easy, and we have more than one sober warning against attempting it.

Dr. Hanna begins the Preface to his excellent *Memoir* by quoting Bishop Ewing : “ Should any one attempt to write the life of Mr. Erskine, the difficulty must ever present itself to him that what he has to depict is spirit and not matter, that he has to convey light, to represent sound — an almost insuperable difficulty.”

And, again, we find Dr. M‘Leod Campbell writing to Bishop Ewing after Mr. Erskine’s death : “ No man is able to say to those who knew him not what he was ; no man could say this to those who knew him in a way that they would feel satisfying.”

These warnings are more than enough to discourage, or even to daunt, but not quite enough to deter. I think, then, that in the gracious map of Erskine’s widespread graces we may mark out pretty clearly certain choice provinces, such as high breeding, sweetness of temper, a subtle and delicate and inquiring intellect, a wide and generous culture—classical, English, and foreign ; a strong and not reluctant sense of the claims of equity in judging others ; an exquisite womanly tenderness of sympathy ; and, above all—and this is what we must always place in the forefront—a filial, fearless love of God, an hourly sense of a Father’s Presence, a necessity of speaking and writing to others freely, of this Heavenly Friend, with a fervour, a refinement, and an obvious sincerity which could never either fatigue or seem out of place.

Spiritual *refinement*, spiritual simplicity, a special gift of being at home with God, and helping others to share in the same sacred company—these seem to me to be among the distinctive notes of this most loveable man.

What Sir James Stephen wrote more than sixty years ago of William Wilberforce, that other fascinating Christian layman, was, if possible, even more true of Thomas Erskine: "God was in all his thoughts. His piety was allied not only to his serious pursuits, but to all the daily pleasures, and even to the whims and amusements of life. The record of his life can only be expressed in the words of an inspired Apostle. It is the story of a life "hidden with Christ in God."

In each of these brilliant men, each the charm of every social circle, their Christian devoutness was a kind of atmosphere felt by all, and, for the time, almost breathed by all; but in the religion of Erskine, profoundly humble as it was, and, as it would appear from several testimonies, continuously growing in consciousness and dread of sin, there was a strictly intellectual, a permanently speculative element, of which there is, I think, no trace in the practical Yorkshire statesman who wrote in his Journal before he entered on his thirtieth year, "God Almighty has set before me two great objects: the Suppression of the Slave Trade and the Reformation of Manners."

My friends, I have neither the wish nor the power to assign to Mr. Erskine his exact, or even an

approximate, position in the theological firmament. "One star differeth from another star in glory." This noble saying of St. Paul must have struck us, even in our boyhood, by its beauty ; but, as the years pass on, and we scan with a more trained eye that firmament of lustrous lives, it strikes us surely yet more by the wide range of its truth.

We cannot locate, we cannot measure, we can hardly compare either the magnitude, or the brilliancy, or set out the relation of each to its neighbour in the heavens. But we can note distinctions ; we can discern both the Paul and the John, the Luther and the Melancthon, and the Calvin, the Bossuet and the Fénélon, the Francis and the Dominic, the Wesley and the Fletcher, the Keble and the Arnold, the Chalmers and the Irving, the Thomas Erskine and the M'Leod Campbell.

Of Campbell it was written in 1872, by Dr. Norman Macleod : " Dr. Campbell was the best man, without exception, I have ever known. This is my first, most decided, and unqualified statement. His character was the most perfect embodiment I have ever seen of the character of Jesus Christ. I never perceived in any other such a constant sense of God's presence."

Of Erskine it was written by Campbell himself, four years earlier : " I am thankful for another visit to Linlathen. I meet in no one the same full realisation of the gift of God as Eternal Life—the life of Christ to be *our* life—that I see in Mr. Erskine ; and this is a bond of the most sacred kind."

To this most loving comment let me add just a

little. In the creed and in the life of every Christian there is one article of faith which I suppose all would claim, I mean the Fatherhood of God. Doubtless it is held by different Christians with different modes of appropriation, different mental processes, and different degrees of certainty.

With Mr. Erskine, if I mistake not, it held a peculiar place, both in the fibres of his intellect, and in the affections of his heart. Many of us may have heard of the story told of him by Dean Stanley, how once, meeting a shepherd in the Highlands, he said to him, in that tone which combined in so peculiar a manner sweetness and command, "Do you know the Father?"

Years afterwards, on those same Highland hills, he met the same shepherd, who recognised him and said, "I know the Father *now*."

In much the same spirit, when speaking once to Principal Shairp of the "silence of God," he had just repeated the words of the Psalm: 'Be not silent to me, O Lord; lest, if Thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit'; and then he added, "But it has not always been silence to me. I have had one revelation, not of anything that was new to me. I did not know anything after it which I did not know before. But it was a joy for which one might bear any sorrow. I felt the power of love, that God is love, that He had loved *me*, that He had spoken to *me*. And then," after a long pause, "that He had broken silence to me." The Father had spoken to His son.

III

HIS HUMOUR

LIFE is made up of abrupt transitions, and so are beautiful human characters. Let us look at Erskine, for a few minutes, from a different but not a conflicting or a confusing point of view. Among the many winning and saving gifts with which our friend was endowed, the gift of humour was not lacking. He had an instinctive perception of the absurd, the incongruous, the "missing link"—perhaps we might even add, a native Caledonian *relish* for them. We cannot dwell at length on this semi-mundane topic, but you will not resent one or two illustrations.

Years ago it was my high privilege to know Principal Shairp of St. Andrews, and to have some walks with him, first at my own Harrow, then at his beloved Aberfeldie, and once in the romantic pass of Killiecrankie. There, one memorable summer day, he pointed out to me, with enthusiasm, the true spot—at some distance, be it noted, from the reputed and now legendary spot—where Claverhouse—*Clayvers*, as he called him—raised his sword

arm, at one unlucky moment, and received under the armpit the fatal bullet.

These bright memories of the past help me to taste the flavour of one very short dialogue—hardly, indeed, a dialogue—between Shairp and Erskine.

One Sunday the two friends had been together to church, when a young divine preached a somewhat rambling, unconnected discourse—not, I fear, very unlike that which you are now endeavouring to enucleate. “We came away,” says Shairp, “and said nothing. Some time afterwards, as we were walking in silence, Mr. Erskine stopped, and, looking round to me, said, ‘The educated mind desiderates a *nexus*.’” How much thought, how much patience, how much long-suffering, how much patriotic regret in that short but deferential tribute to his country’s love of logic!

One more instance of this fascinating gift I cannot help recording, though it sweeps us back into stormy seas.

In 1831, when Dr. M’Leod Campbell was finally condemned for his doctrine of “universal atonement and pardon through the death of Christ,” before the sentence was actually pronounced, some slight discussion arose as to the order of procedure. Dr. X., who held at the time the office of Chief Clerk of the Assembly, meaning exactly the reverse of what he said, was heard to declare that “these doctrines of Mr. Campbell would remain and flourish after the Church of Scotland had perished

and was forgotten." Mr. Erskine, who was present at his friend's side, caught the words. Turning to those behind him, he whispered, "This spake he, *not of himself*, but, being *High Priest that year*, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation, and not for that nation only, but also that He should gather together in one the children of God that are scattered abroad."

It has long been an item in my literary creed that this is one of the very finest of all impromptu repartees of a serious kind, always excepting that incomparable reply of the poor Sidonian mother, that truly "heathen saint of Christendom," "Yea, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their master's table."

IV

HIS FRIENDSHIP WITH THOMAS CARLYLE

WE are nearing our appointed goal, but there is one bypath in Mr. Erskine's pilgrimage which I cannot bring myself to pass over or to treat very hurriedly. . . . To some who love him few passages in his long life will be more stirring and more provocative of a not ignoble curiosity than his relations with Thomas Carlyle. There is, to my mind, a peculiar mystery, as well as a peculiar sacredness, in the friendships of two good men, one of whom is profoundly and almost passionately Christian, and the other either not a Christian at all, or, if so, far removed from some of the most commanding and what his friend would consider fundamental, fastnesses of the Christian creed. It may be that our age has seen, and is daily seeing, more of this class of friendships—illogical, perhaps, but sincere and tender—than any age has seen before. We cannot link them in imagination with the age of St. Paul and St. John, hardly perhaps with the age of Anselm, or Dante, or Xavier, or the Wesleys.

Many of the holiest men of the last two centuries,

could hardly have been intimate friends of Carlyle—hardly, I think, William Wilberforce; certainly not William Cowper or John Keble. But between Erskine and Carlyle there was a singular sense of brotherhood. It spread its charm over many years, and was never disturbed. Their letters are real mirrors reflecting real men. Perhaps it is just worth notice that they are always to each other *Mr. Carlyle* and *Mr. Erskine*; but still there is clearly not only a perfect trust between them but a warm affection. Erskine is nothing if he is not Christian, and yet he seems never embarrassed in writing affectionately on deep matters to his old friend. We find him, in 1838, expressing a hope to his sister that his kinsman James will read the newly published *French Revolution*. “It is good,” he says, “to be brought in contact with a mind like Carlyle’s, so unconventional in all matters.”

Three years later, in 1841, he thus encourages the Editor of *Cromwell’s Letters*: “Proceed with your Puritans. It is the work given you to do. Blessed are they who see a work set before them, and are conscious of a capacity to do it. It is a great undertaking to lift them out of the rubbish. If you love them well enough, you will find out their mystery of life. Why do you love them? If you could explain to yourself and others that why, the business would be well advanced, for it is no dead thing that you love.”

Again, writing a deeply devout letter to a lady

friend in 1843, he gives us a clue to one reason for his love of Carlyle. "Have you ever read any of Carlyle's writings? I love the man. . . . He has a real belief in the invisible, which in these railroad and steam-engine days is a great matter. He sees and condemns the evil and baseness of living in the lower part of our nature instead of living in the higher. He is full of thoughts, of genius, and of high imagination."

Sorrows, as they arise, fathom the depths of friendships. Who has not found it so? Twenty-three years later, on the 1st of December, 1866, Mr. Erskine lost his greatly loved sister, Mrs. Stirling, of whom he wrote to Lady Augusta Stanley, Dean Stanley's wife, "I have many friends; but none could fill her place. She had no crotchet, nor caprice, nor vanity. She never either spoke or acted for effect; all was love and truth and duty."

This heavy blow brought out the tenderness of Carlyle's rugged but faithful heart.

"Oh, my dear Mr. Erskine, what a boundless disaster has befallen you. I know it too well. The one that was your own in this world is lost. . . . God is above us. She is with God, even as we are. What more can we say? . . . God be with you, dear friend. I am ever affectionately yours."

Less than four months passed, and the other dear sister, Mrs. Paterson, was taken from him. Again Carlyle hastens to his friend's side: "Under your quiet words, in that little note, there is legible to me a depth of violent grief and bereavement

which seems to enjoin *silence*. . . . It is the saddest feature of old age that the old man has to see himself daily grow more lonely. . . . Well, well, there is a blessedness in this too, if we take it well. Courage, my friend. Let us endure patiently, and act piously to the end." And then he adds a sentence which pleased the bereaved mourner : " Adieu, my friend. I must come to Scotland again at least once, if I live ; and while you are there, it is not quite a solitary country to me."

To which Mr. Erskine replies : " Your good and kind words are always very welcome and helpful. A purpose of goodness and kindness at the foundation of all things, and ordering all things, is the only rest for the soul of man amidst the agitations of time ; and every loving voice that reaches me bears its testimony to the existence of such a purpose, and its great Purposer."

Two years later, in February 1869, there was one more remarkable interchange of letters between the two friends — the saintly lifelong Christian, who could, in his own words, " pray and hope before long to die by the kiss of God," and the rough prophet of veracity and justice, to whom atheism and anarchy were hateful, but all known creeds unreal and outlived. Carlyle is thanking his friend for another loving letter, and these are some of his words : " ' Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy will be done,' " What else can we say ? The other night, in my sleepless tossings about, which are growing more and more miserable, these

words, that brief and grand prayer, came strangely into my mind, with an altogether new emphasis ; as if written, and shining for me in mild pure splendour, on the black bosom of the night there ; when I, as it were, read them word by word, with a sudden check to my imperfect wanderings, with a sudden softness of composure which was much unexpected. Not for perhaps thirty or forty years had I once formally repeated that prayer ; nay, I never felt before how intensely the voice of man's soul it is ; the inmost aspiration of all that is high and pious in poor human nature ; right worthy to be recommended with an ' after this manner pray ye.' "

Christian friends, I think you will agree with me that in that year, 1869, there was probably but one person living to whom Carlyle would have opened the windows of his heart and of his soul in such language—language, surely, " not far from the kingdom of God." One claim of Thomas Erskine to our love and our reverence is that, by the beauty of his life, and the wide range of his sympathies, he could draw such pieties from Thomas Carlyle.

One year more, and on March 20, 1870, Erskine followed his beloved sisters.

" He had been " says a famous writer, " among the first of his countrymen to recognise Carlyle, and to see in him, across his heterodoxies, the intense ' belief ' which is the essence of genuine piety. Erskine's orthodoxy, on the other hand, had been no impediment to Carlyle's affection for him."

Of this affection he was to leave one more written proof. "On Sunday," so he writes, "Thomas Erskine, nearly my last Scotch friend, died, weary and heavy-laden, but patient, true, and reverently peaceable to the very last. Another of my few last links severed, about which and whom the flutter to me has not yet ceased without or within. Night before last, just as I was falling asleep, vision of him in Princes Street, as if face to face; clear discernment of what a pure and beautiful and brotherly soul he had been, and that he, too, was away for ever."

There were many Christian tears shed at Erskine's grave, but the tears of Carlyle have for me a peculiar pathos.

V

CONCLUSION

MY kind friends, we must bring this long paper to a close. I thank you for the patience with which you have listened to something very different from what you may have looked for. We are most of us willing to turn a kindly and pitying eye on what a modest author calls "a poor thing, but mine own." But, in this case, the "poor thing" is not even "mine own." It is, as the least cynical among you must have noticed, made up of purloinings from the writings of others ; in fact, an unblushing cento of avowed and unrepentant robberies. And yet I am not without some hope that, even thus portrayed, you may have conceived, or renewed, the desire to explore the holy places of a life of much power and of rare beauty. We remember Plato's immortal tribute to his master in the last sentence of the *Phaedo* ; a book which Erskine read and loved. Let me give it you in the not unworthy version of Benjamin Jowett, another of Erskine's valued friends : "Such was the end of our friend, whom I may truly call the wisest, and

justest, and best of all the men whom I have ever known."

To me at least there is nothing that jars, nothing that suggests an anti-climax, in the closing words of Thomas Erskine's eloquent and affectionate biographer—

"Few have ever passed away from among their fellows of whom so large a number of those who knew him best, and were most competent to judge, would have said, as they did of Mr. Erskine, that he was the best, the holiest man they ever knew; the man most human yet most divine, with least of the stains of earth, with most of the spirit of heaven."

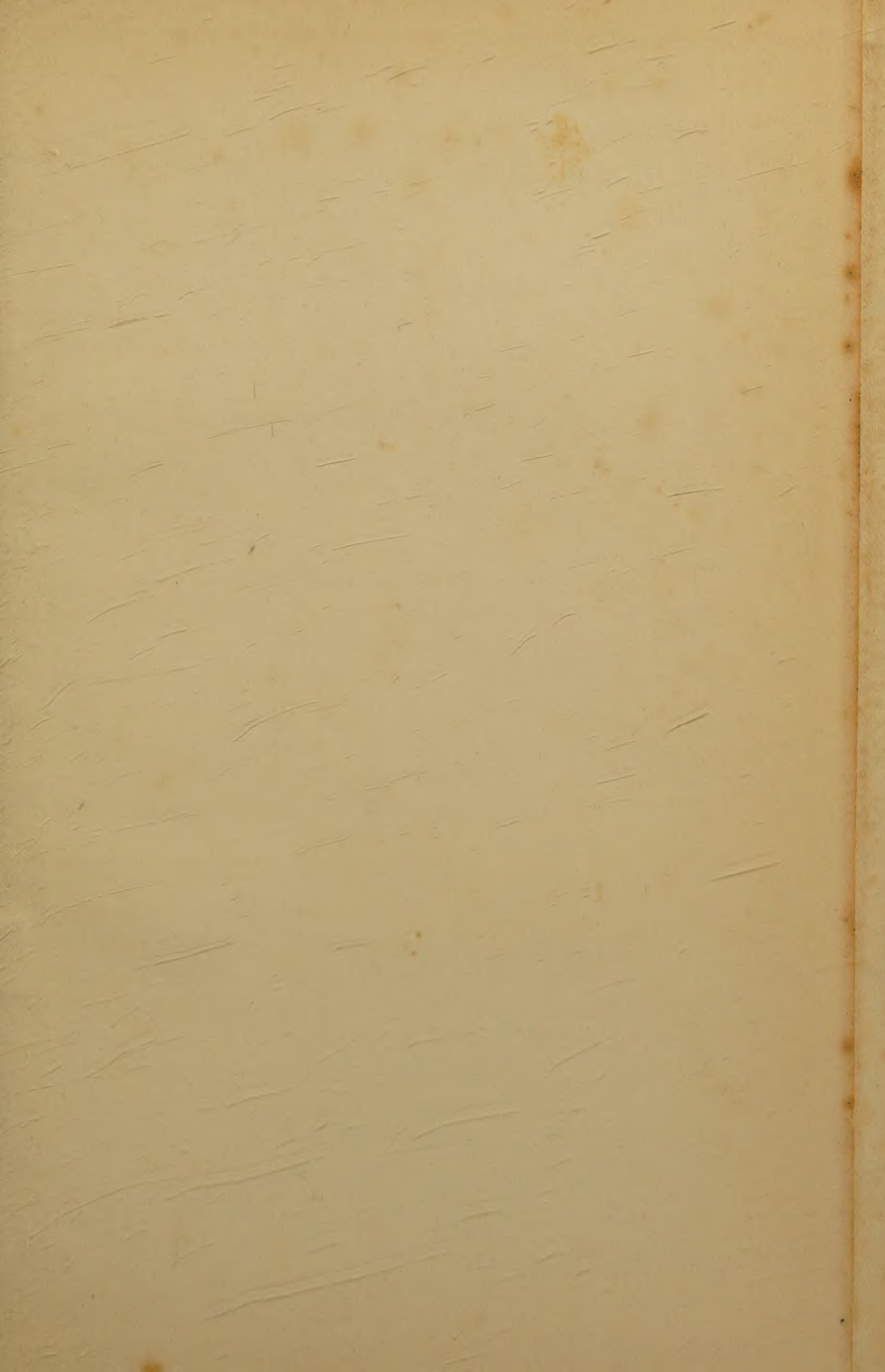
"One star differeth from another star in glory," in beauty, in radiance, in power to attract.

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THE END.

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